

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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Like-minded Christian ministries connect at Connexions conference

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MAR 05 2003



ALAN DOERKSEN

Garland Hoel (right), of Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, helped plan the Connexions conference, which brought together more than 50 Christian agencies and churches from across the country.

Alan Doerksen

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. – Christian agencies need to work together more in order to be an effective witness in a mostly secular culture, and to follow Jesus' will for unity among Christians, say organizers of the Connexions 2003 conference. The conference — held in Mississauga, Ont., in late January — was the first of its kind in Canada, and involved representatives of more than 50 Christian agencies and churches from across the country.

Spirit of partnering

Gary Walsh is president of Interdev, an agency that helped facilitate Connexions 2003. He is also the former president of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC). "There were some key leaders who sensed a greater and greater need for the spirit of partnering to become increasingly pervasive across ministries," he tells *Christian Courier*, explaining the reasons for the conference. "Though everyone longs for this, it

seems that we need to take the initiative to take steps to actually lead us in that direction. Training — exposure to the principles — is often a key factor."

There are several good reasons

for Christians agencies to co-operate, Walsh contends. "The most powerful one is, as Jesus said in his high-priestly prayer, when we are one the world will know.... That's a very high motivator. It is

also true that, as we read in Psalm 133, this is so much in the heart of God that God actually blesses ministries that understand this." That Psalm starts with the verse: "See, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live harmoniously together!" (Berkeley Version).

Secularization a motivation

Another reason to co-operate closely is: "The secularization of our society — the continuing reminder that we no longer live in a 'Christian country' — has quickened people of faith to the reality that we'd better start working together because none of us is going to make a dent alone."

Walsh sees a growing trend toward Christian ministries building partnerships with each other. In fact, building partnerships is what his agency, Interdev, has been doing since 1982. According to its website, "Our mission is to serve the Church by developing effective, self-sustaining ministry partnerships."

In a keynote address to conference participants, Walsh gave illustrations of difficult, easy, successful and not-so-successful partnerships that he has encountered. He examined these "through three sets of lenses: Biblical studies; church history; and pragmatism."

Walsh argued, "The estrangement we all feel, the tendency to go it alone, is actually a result of the Fall. This is about sin. This is about lack of full communion with God and each other. This is a ministry that calls for a high level of dependence on God to help us break through this inclination."

Focus on common areas

Garland Hoel, eastern regional director for Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada, was on the steering committee for the conference. He offers several reasons for Christian agencies to work closely together. "Archbishop Marcel Gervais [of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ottawa] reminded us

See CHRISTIANS page 2...

Disarm Iraq without war, say Christian leaders in U.S., U.K.

We publish here in its entirety a statement signed by a broad coalition of Christian leaders in the United States and United Kingdom opposing the initiation of war with Iraq:

"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4)

As the calls for military action against Iraq continue from our two governments, despite the new opening for UN weapons inspections, we are compelled by the prophetic vision of peace to speak a word of caution to our governments and our people. We represent a diversity of Christian communities — from the just war

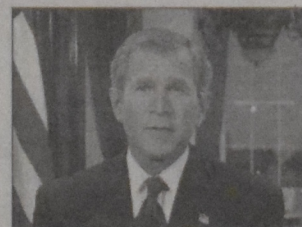
traditions to the pacifist tradition. As leaders of these communities in the United States and the United Kingdom, it is our considered judgment that a preemptive war against Iraq, particularly in the current situation would not be justified. Yet we believe Iraq must be disarmed of weapons of mass destruction; and that alternative courses to war should be diligently pursued.

Hussein's a real threat

Let there be no mistake: We regard Saddam Hussein and his regime in Iraq as a real threat to his own people, neighboring countries, and to the world. His

previous use and continued development of weapons of mass destruction is of great concern to us. The question is how to respond to that threat. We believe the Iraqi government has a duty to stop its internal repression, to end its threats to peace, to abandon its efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, and to respect the legitimate role of the United Nations in ensuring that it does so. But our nations and the international community must pursue these goals in a manner consistent with moral principles, political wisdom, and international law.

As Christians, we seek to be guided by the vision of a world in



CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

Christian leaders are urging President George W. Bush to pursue alternative means to disarm Iraq of its most destructive weapons.

which nations do not attempt to resolve international problems by making war on other nations. It is a long-held Christian principle that

all governments and citizens are obliged to work for the avoidance of war.

We therefore urge our governments, especially President Bush and Prime Minister Blair, to pursue alternative means to disarm Iraq of its most destructive weapons. Diplomatic co-operation with the United Nations in renewing rigorously effective and thoroughly comprehensive weapons inspections, linked to the gradual lifting of sanctions, could achieve the disarmament of Iraq without the risks and costs of military attack.

We do not believe that
See PREEMPTIVE page 3...

News

Ground rules to help Christian ministries co-operate

Alan Doerksen

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. — Christian agencies have a lot to offer each other when working in partnership, but certain ground rules need to be laid out so that a partnership can be successful. Organizers of the Connexions 2003 conference in Mississauga outlined some workable rules to follow and gave some recent examples of successful partnerships among Christian agencies.

"Ministry partnerships are not like marriage partnerships. There is a time for an end," explained Brian O'Connell, director of Interdev's International Partner Services. O'Connell oversees Interdev's involvement in international leadership conferences and global partnerships efforts, and has worked and taught in more than 40 countries.

O'Connell outlined a partnership life cycle agencies tend to go through, including these stages:

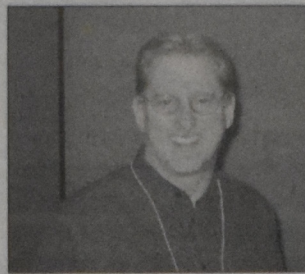
- Exploration/education — which includes identifying key opportunities, identifying partner agencies, identifying a facilitator, and developing consensus;

- Formation/solidifying — in which agencies focus on what they have in common, rather than differences;

- Operation/"Let it fly" — which includes establishing joint projects, identifying emerging leaders, education/training of partners, and ongoing effort.

What can we do together?

O'Connell compared partnership principles to rails on a railway: small but absolutely vital.



ALAN DOERKSEN PHOTOS

Interdev's Brian O'Connell

Two types of focus groups he defined are: interest groups — in which members make connections, share information, and do peer mentoring, and learn together about the area they are interested in; and working groups — which "explore the 'what can we do together?' question." The next stage is to form a task group, "to plan and strategize on a specific project."

With such groups, suggested O'Connell, "the idea is taking tools back with you, to have the arrows in the quiver in case you need to use them." Two recent partnerships among Christian agencies which have been successful are the Clergy Care Partnership, and the Refugee Highway Partnership.

Clergy Care Partnership

Aileen Van Ginkel, director of Centre for Ministry Empowerment of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC), explained how the Clergy Care Partnership was set up. It all started when a pastor within the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) was in a crisis situation. "Gary Walsh, who was

EFC president at the time, got a call from PAOC saying, 'This is too big.'"

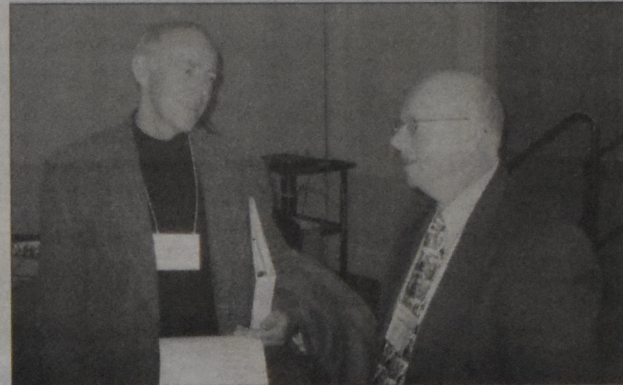
After that call, Van Ginkel and leaders from several denominations — including Bill Veenstra, Canadian Ministries Director of the Christian Reformed Church, and Ken Bellous, executive minister of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec — met together to discuss what the key issues were. They included moral issues, and conflict within a congregation or denomination.

"Out of that group of six, we had three volunteering to be a steering committee," reports Van Ginkel.

In November 2001, a follow-up Clergy Care Consultation was held. At that meeting, participants "came up with some really wonderful, creative ideas," says Van Ginkel. "The priority was to address clergy in crisis." One problem some clergy in crisis face is hesitancy to speak to overseers in their denomination about a serious problem. So the first step was to start a task force to set up a clergy help-line, which would offer "very brief, minimal counseling" to clergy, and recommend them and possibly their families to qualified counselors. Such a help-line would allow anonymity.

"Focus on the Family became involved because they had an interest in clergy families also," explains Van Ginkel. Because of that agency's related work, it was "feasible for them to operate this project."

One obstacle it faced was the large expense involved. There were tensions about how much



Geoff Tunnicliffe (right), chair of EFC's Global Mission Roundtable, talks with conference participant Larry Willard.

money each denomination should contribute, says Van Ginkel. But now, this partnership project has funding in place and could be launched this year, she reports. The next step for the steering committee is to develop prevention-type approaches for clergy.

Refugee Highway Partnership

Another successful ministry partnership that was recently developed is the Refugee Highway Partnership. Geoff Tunnicliffe, chair of EFC's Global Mission Roundtable, explained how this started when the World Evangelical Alliance's Missions Commission set up a consultation to discuss global partnerships. This led to a Refugee Highway Consultation in Izmir, Turkey, in November 2001, at which 185 Christian agency leaders from 43 countries discussed what they could do together. They

launched working groups on specific issues and agreed to continue to meet together and collaborate.

Last year, a follow-up meeting was held in Cyprus, where they put together a Code of Best Practices for Christian Refugee Ministry. According to the Globalmissions.org website, this code is "designed as a benchmark document to guide the policies and practice of organizations regarding Christian humanitarian service and witness to refugees, internally displaced people and asylum seekers."

The Code defines terms such as Refugee Highway, which "symbolizes the paths traveled by refugees seeking safety and protection," as well as "refugee," "asylum seeker" and "internally displaced person."

This Code outlines core values shared by Christian refugee ministries, agreed-upon policies, practices, and principles. It commits members to:

- address the underlying issues that cause refugees to flee;
- defend the legal and human rights of refugees;
- understand the root causes that uproot people and to denounce unjust and inhumane policies, practices and conditions which force people to flee;

- collaborate and partner with churches and Christian organizations, demonstrating the biblical principle of unity in service;

- rely on God as the ultimate source for wisdom, strength and love in all aspects of refugee work;
- engage in holistic ministry, responding to the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs of refugees, while demonstrating a Christ-like life.

This partnership has also released a CD with resources to help churches and agencies develop refugee programs and set up working groups to focus on specific areas of need in refugee ministry.

Christians need each other to combat secularization

... continued from page 1

that the task is greater than any of us can address," says Hoel, alluding to one of the speakers. "We need to focus on the areas we have in common: among other things, the priesthood of believers, the centrality of the Word and of Jesus, the fact that we have a common enemy, and that we need each other."

Hoel agrees with Walsh that increasing secularization is a challenge Christians need to face together. "I believe that as secularization grows in our world — closer to home, too — we're becoming more aware ... that we need each other.... We don't really know what direction things are going to take here in our sheltered world. We've gone through a long period of shelter that most Christians would never dream of."

Like Walsh, Hoel believes that

Jesus encouraged unity among Christians. "In keeping with Jesus' prayer in John 17, Jesus made it clear that as various parts of the body work together and are seen to be acknowledging Jesus as Lord, this is a great testimony to the world.

Unity encourages youth

"I believe it's also an encouragement to young people," says Hoel, noting that young Christians are "not interested in what you call your denomination or your organization. They want their lives to count for something. I believe that as we work together, we can address that need they have, and we can provide them with those kinds of ministry opportunities they need."

Hoel worked closely with members of the Canadian Bible Society

(CBS), EFC, the Catholic Biblical Association, the Salvation Army, and Scripture Union Canada to plan out the conference. "We started working approximately two years ago," he explains. "It's been a great experience seeing how God has led us through a process of refining." During the conference, he and other organizers were "trying to be open to God's direction."

Taking a holistic approach

Wycliffe has already been partnering with other like-minded agencies, says Hoel. "We have a close working relationship with the Canadian Bible Society. Most of the publishing CBS has done in recent years are languages for which Wycliffe has done the translation — along with national translators — and CBS has brought these things to publication and published

them" — New Testaments, for example.

Another of Wycliffe's partnerships is the Forum of Bible Agencies, organized by Wycliffe and the United Bible Societies about 12 years ago, says Hoel. Since then, another 12 agencies have joined — including Scripture Union Canada.

"As we think of the nature of ministry, the Kingdom of God is best served when ministry takes a holistic approach," asserts Hoel. "In some cases, Wycliffe teams are able to provide holistic ministry and they have done this since our inception. In other cases, there are other agencies with whom we can partner. They can help to broaden the focus, so the ministry becomes holistic. We can provide some components that other agencies can help to round out."

News/Politics

Preemptive war a mistake, say church leaders

... continued from page 1

preemptive war with Iraq: is a last resort, could effectively guard against massive civilian casualties, would be waged with adequate international authority, and could predictably create a result proportionate to the cost. And it is not clear that the threat of Saddam Hussein cannot be contained in other, less costly ways. An attack on Iraq could set a precedent for preemptive war, further destabilize the Middle East, and fuel more terrorism. We, therefore, do not believe that war with Iraq can be justified under the principle of a "just war," but would be illegal, unwise, and immoral.

Whether we oppose all war, or reluctantly accept it only as a last resort, in this case the U.S. government has not presented an adequate

justification for war. Iraq has not attacked or directly threatened the United States, nor is it clear that its weapons of mass destruction pose an immediate and urgent threat to neighboring countries or the world. It has not been credibly implicated in the attacks of September 11. Under international law, including the U.N. Charter, the only circumstance under which individual states may invoke the authority to go to war is in self-defense following an armed attack. In Christian just war doctrine, there are rigorous conditions even for an act of self-defense. Preemptive war by one state against another is not permitted by either law or doctrine. For the United States to initiate military action against Iraq without authorization by the United Nations Security Council would set a

dangerous precedent that would threaten the foundations of international security. And under our domestic governance, the U.S. Congress and the U.K. Parliament must also play a key role in authorizing any contemplated military action.

Unwise

The potential social and diplomatic consequences of a war against Iraq make it politically unwise. The U.S. and the U.K. could be acting almost entirely alone. Many nations, including our European allies and most of the Arab world, strongly oppose such a war. To initiate a major war in an area of the world already in great turmoil could destabilize governments and increase political extremism throughout the Middle East and beyond. It would add fuel to the fires

of violence that are already consuming the region. It would exacerbate anti-American hatred and produce new recruits for terror attacks against the United States and Israel. A unilateral war would also undermine the continued political co-operation needed for the international campaign to isolate terrorist networks. The U.S. could very well win a battle against Iraq and lose the campaign against terrorism. The potentially dangerous and highly chaotic aftermath of a war with Iraq would require years of occupation, investment, and a high level of international co-operation — none of which have yet to be adequately planned or even considered. And the Iraqi people themselves have an important role in creating non-violent resistance within their own country with international support.

includes massive air attacks and urban warfare in the streets of Baghdad, tens of thousands of innocent civilians could lose their lives. This alone makes such a military attack morally unacceptable. In addition, the people of Iraq continue to suffer severely from the effects of the Gulf War, the resulting decade of sanctions, and the neglect and oppression of a brutal dictator. Rather than inflicting further suffering on them through a costly war, we should assist in rebuilding their country and alleviating their suffering. We also recognize that in any conflict, the casualties among attacking forces could be very high. This potential suffering in our own societies should also lead to prudent caution.

We reaffirm our religious hope for a world in which "nation shall not lift up sword against nation." We pray that our governments will be guided by moral principles, political wisdom, and legal standards, and will step back from their calls for war.

Knights of Malta

Several countries vie for the position of smallest state in the world, the Vatican City being a principal contender. But it may be that the honor should go to an entity whose very existence most people — at least in the Anglo-Saxon countries — are unaware of.

In the eleventh century, at the time of the Crusades, a hospital was established in Jerusalem to serve the pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. A monastic order, the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, was founded by the Blessed Gérard Tonque to operate the hospital, whose role continued there until the Crusaders were finally driven out of the region in 1291. From there they settled in nearby Cyprus, where they built Colossi Castle in Limassol.

Combined religious and military order

At some point the order developed into something sounding odd to contemporary sensibilities: a combined religious and military order. In 1310 the Knights Hospitaller, as they were sometimes called, moved to the island of Rhodes, over which they exercised sovereign rights. Here they assumed the role of defending the Christian world from further onslaughts by the Ottoman Turks. The palace of the order's grand masters is still to be seen in Rhodes.

In 1523 Suleyman the Magnificent defeated the Knights, who subsequently received the islands of Malta from the Emperor Charles V. From 1530 they took up residence here and became known as the Knights of Malta. A distinctive eight-point cross became their most recognizable symbol. From their Maltese stronghold they successfully held off the Turks, playing an especially significant role in the decisive Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Had it not been for their efforts, it is likely that the Ottoman Empire would have extended into the western Mediterranean and possibly further into Europe itself.

The Knights' sovereignty over Malta lasted until the end of the 18th century, when Napoleon expelled them on his way to Egypt. After this they lost their territorial sovereignty. The briefly reigning Tsar Paul of Russia adopted the order and declared himself grand master, a bizarre move



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

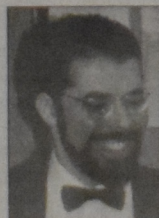
unrecognized by virtually everyone, including the Vatican. From there, claimants to the lost heritage of the Knights of Malta arose from many quarters, and even at present there are numerous organizations asserting this status, the vast majority of which are essentially bogus.

The genuine article

However, the genuine article is located in Rome at the Palazzo Malta on the Via Condotti. The Sovereign Military Order of Malta has long since lost its military function, restricting itself to service of the poor and sick. The 78th grand master, Fra Andrew Bertie, has the rank of a princely head of state in an organization that has its own constitution and issues its own stamps and passports. A subject of international law, it maintains diplomatic relations with some 92 mostly Catholic states. It further sends representatives to several international organizations and has observer status at the United Nations.

Yet, unlike virtually every other sovereign state, it has no territory of its own, except for its palace in Rome. In this respect it is anomalous, and it might be doubted whether it even qualifies to be a state. Probably not, if territory is considered a necessary precondition. But the continued existence of the Order of Malta does serve to demonstrate that, while the modern state has extended its jurisdiction around the globe, there are a very few survivals of an earlier, feudal era, when political rule was not as

easily differentiated from other varieties of authority, including ecclesiastical. These include San Marino, Monaco, Andorra, the Vatican itself and, finally, the Knights of Malta.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is quite certain he would not look good

Immoral

We are particularly concerned by the potential human costs of war. If the military strategy

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Editorial

Thoughts from the bottom of a pit (but not like Joseph)

Harry der Nederlanden

Recently our pastor has been preaching on the story of Joseph, one of my favorite Bible stories when I was a child. I liked Joseph a lot. It was neat the way he jerked his brothers around when they came to Egypt for grain. I couldn't wait for the big moment when he jumped up and spread his arms wide and cried, "Look, it's me – Joseph!" The chills still spiral up my spine.

This time through, however, I saw what a spoiled, self-centred, obnoxious kid he must have been. He was the kind of kid who only plays nice as long as things go his way, the kind of kid who is your friend as long as it serves him.

Friends I'd have gladly tossed into a pit

I've had 'friends' like that who I'd gladly have tossed into a pit at times. In fact, I may even have done so now and then. Not many caravans passed through Beverly, however, at least not at first. For some years 118th Ave., our main street, dead-ended at the North Saskatchewan River, near the Edmonton City Dump. There were grassy fields, steep river banks, a railroad bridge, a huge gravel pit, acres of woods and the City Dump – the greatest playground in the Western World.

Between the City Dump and the highway was a wooded area pocked with deep pits. They looked like bomb craters, 10 to 20 feet deep with steep sides and only a few feet across at the bottom. I remember sitting

at the bottom of one of these pits for what seemed like hours, hoping my companions wouldn't forget about me. I'd slid down for some real good reason – to peel some bark off a white birch tree – and I couldn't get out. Hunkering at the bottom of the hole, unsure of what was going to happen, I was Joseph.

I hoped my friends were going to come through better than Joseph's brothers.

To make a long story short, my friends didn't sell me out. Like I said, no caravans passed through Beverly in those days. If my memory serves me right, though, they didn't exactly rush to save me. First they just stood looking down on me, laughing gleefully and shouting down silly suggestions. At last, however, they found a sapling and hauled me up out of the pit. I'd have done the same for any one of them – even for the kid who'd laughed the loudest and who'd given me a black eye right after catechism.

God picked the spoiled rich kid

But Joseph wasn't one of the gang. He probably wouldn't even have been playing in the gravel pits with the rest of us. He would have run home to tell his mom and ours how dangerous the place was, and we'd probably have been banned from the best playground in the Western World.

Why did God pick the most obnoxious kid out of that big family to be their savior? In our neighborhood, he'd have been the last kid picked when we were picking teams – and then only because he owned the bat and ball and catcher's mitt. But God picked the spoiled rich kid, and he picked him for the most important job in the world.

That job wasn't just to save his family; it was to represent to Israel and to the church how God enters history to save his people.

When I was a kid, the climax of the Joseph story was the reunion scene: the rejected, lost, castaway, a prince who saves his whole family. This isn't, of course, the end of the story in the Bible. What would Joseph have thought if he'd lived to see his people turned into slaves to be worked to death by Pharaoh? What would Abraham have thought, seeing his seed making bricks for a heathen empire?

Was God playing a big joke on his covenant people?

Mixing again with a pagan culture

After calling Abram out of pagan Ur and bringing him to the promised land, why does he bring them to the brink of starvation while seeing to it that the Egyptian granaries are full? Jacob and his sons are forced to leave the promised land and to turn to pagan Egypt to be saved. Instead of being a holy, set-apart people, they mix once again with a pagan culture.

The Bible also tells us that the grain Joseph taxed from the Egyptian people was used to enslave them to Pharaoh and extend his power. In order to turn Joseph, a spoiled brat, into a hero, God sells his covenant people into slavery and strengthens the pagan Pharaoh, who considered himself a god. That's how the Joseph story looks, say, from the viewpoint of Moses' family some 400 years later. From the middle of the story, God's purposes are sometimes as clear as mud.

Yes, for someone who knows everything, God does a lousy job of picking people for his team. Stop and think a moment. Noah wasn't exactly father of the year. What about Jacob – tricky Jacob? Anybody picking tribal chiefs would certainly have picked Esau; he was

a man's man, cut out for the hero role. Moses wasn't exactly a Spartacus either. And why pick Saul, a guy with bipolar disease, as the first King of Israel?

Come to think of it, why stake your reputation on the Israelites? Most Western historians and intellectuals would have chosen the Greeks. They had much, much more going for them. Politically, militarily, artistically, philosophically, they had the Israelites beat hands down.

And then the Old and New Testaments would have been in the same language. Think of all the headaches our seminarians would have been spared! Maybe we wouldn't have a minister shortage now.

Frivolous thoughts for a time of crisis

You're right: wacky, frivolous thoughts for a time of crisis, for a time when we need clear heads and leaders who know what's going on.

Actually, we have quite a few of those – in church and state, morally, culturally and economically. They write me letters and call me on the phone to tell me what to tell you.

Tell them George Bush isn't a Christian but a greedy, warmongering Yankee. Tell them George Bush is a courageous Christian leader and a man of vision. Tell them the Lord hates homosexuality. Tell them no one chooses to be a homosexual, so we should stop making their lives miserable. Tell them abortion is murder and that there's a genocide going on right in our own centres of healing. Tell them how many women used to die from botched abortions. Tell them the feminists are ruining the family, the capitalists raping the forests, the corporations running the country, the consumers consuming everything in sight, that being fat is a sin and being thin an obsession. Tell them.

I used to think that if we got our Calvinistic, Kuyperian perspective right, slowly but surely a Christian consensus would emerge – a unique, clarifying, convincing viewpoint on basic issues that would bring about such impressive change for the better that even non-Christians would put their bets on the heroes of the kingdom. But picking heroes and picking the winning team is not faith.

And just because in times of crisis men and women of faith give conflicting advice, this doesn't mean one or the other of them has abandoned the faith, that one is witnessing for the devil and the other for God. Today some Christians, faithful to Jesus Christ, believing Scripture, sustained by the Holy Spirit, will say the only way to rid the world of the evil that is Saddam Hussein is to go to war. Others, equally faithful, equally committed to Scripture, will say to go to war is wicked. Both are witnesses to the way, the truth and the life, and we must treat one another with the respect due to fellow believers.

That doesn't make the struggle to come to clarity and consensus any less important. We strive for unanimity because we are already united in one faith, one Lord, one baptism in the Spirit. But here, out of the muddy middle of the story, we do not speak as those who can trot out the truth and force it to speak, like an interrogated prisoner. We can only witness to what eye has not (yet) seen or ear has not (yet) heard. We don't know everything, but we do know Jesus Christ and him crucified, and Scripture tells us that's a good start.

Sometimes we learn more sitting at the bottom of a pit than standing on a mountain.

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Letter

With war looming, we should share our best insights

After I first read your editorial "On debating the war with Iraq" (Feb. 3, 2003), and after reflecting on your provocative comments with respect to the challenge of "Making sense of Bush's fixation on Iraq" and the clear need to "listen closely to all sides," I was inclined to respond in detail. However, I don't have the energy to do so now.

Indeed, as your closing paragraph observes: "Without a Christian constituency with a developed Christian understanding rooted in a Christian worldview, we have nothing to offer but unhelpful self-righteous slogans."

I certainly would like to know much, much more, so that I can daily do greater justice to Jesus' abiding message of personal and societal reconciliation, justice, love, mercy and peace in my own fallible attempts to be of some Christian cultural service. I try to do so via the media, in correspondence and during discussions with government policy-advisers and political decision-makers.

At the edge of a world war

We all discover every day there is much to learn, especially now that so much happens so quickly. We say and do the best we can in the very serious circumstances in which we and our world find ourselves – at the edge of yet another world war!

Some events move with such frightening speed, particularly after September 11, 2002. We are obliged to share our best insights (we all see through a glass darkly – 1 Cor. 13:12) and engage in the most meaningful actions. We may do so in faith and hope, for the sake of justice and peace for all peoples and nations.

It has become obvious that right now we do not have the luxury of plenty of time for leisurely, theological conversations and abstract, lengthy discussions of academic position papers. For example, re. the implications of who and which institutions and organizations have what unique responsibility to speak their Christian mind(s) and engage in which Christian public actions, when, where, and how.

Biblical concern for humanity

In this connection, it would have been most helpful if the Christian Reformed Church's Synod meeting in June 2002, had taken the time to review the ongoing relevance of previous Synods' decisions and helpful guidelines as well as their important actions regarding peace and war (actually life and death!). Particularly in view of all that had been and already was happening, both in the U.S.A. and the Middle East, the 2002 Synod should have issued public statements of deep, biblical concern for the well-being of humanity and God's good creation.

Official communications were sent by Synod in 1982 (20 years ago) to the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Canada, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Synod's 1982 open letters referred these three world leaders, the public and the churches to the CRC's Guidelines for Justifiable Warfare. Synod's open letters

pointedly reminded the world leaders and all others that:

"in the present political situation of the world, our synod and many of our church members are deeply concerned about and fearful of the possibility of the actual use of nuclear weapons.

"[We] urge you to defend the sanctity of life with all the authority and power of your high office. The present stockpiling of nuclear weapons threatens the existence and survival of the entire human race. [We] urge you, therefore, to reduce the number of these atrocious weapons as much and as rapidly as possible in order to ultimately abolish these weapons altogether under proper international surveillance."

Pastoral-prophetic statements.

I draw CC readers' attention to these significant Synodical declarations and public actions, partly in response to the Feb. 3 column "Iraq and the just war theory" by David Koyzis of Redeemer University College. It would have been helpful had David elaborated on their historic and continuing relevance and the church leadership's confessional calling to convey the CRC's Christian position in pastoral-prophetic statements.

Such statements can concretely contribute to our communal calling and citizenship privilege to advocate and practice "justice, love, mercy and faithfulness" (Matt. 23:23 and Luke 11:42). As well, we should remind Ottawa and Washington of governments' international public-justice responsibility to engage in principled negotiations aimed at establishing enduring peace and equal justice for all nations and peoples.

These biblical challenges directly relate to the immense crisis in which we all are called to be consistent channels of biblical love, peace, justice and reconciliation – life-affirming witnesses wherever we are and in all that we do!

Expressing his faith-based political convictions

In the crucial context of the real possibility of all-out war worldwide, I have been expressing my faith-based political convictions in the *Toronto Star* and the *Scarborough Mirror*. They are my fallible efforts meant to contribute to public discussions. Space limitations make it often difficult to say everything that lives in one's heart. Hence the specific focus in my periodic letters to these Toronto newspapers.

My letter to the *Star*, published on Jan. 25 under the heading "Let conscience guide Canada's Iraq policy", I voiced my heart-felt plea: "We all must give lasting peace a genuine chance by requiring that enlightened conscience be our government's guide."

I communicated the same appeal in letters to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Opposition parties' leaders, as well as a number of other influential Members of Parliament with whom I keep in regular contact, especially now regarding Canada's international justice responsibilities, particularly in relation to the U.S., the U.N and Iraq.

I sincerely hope that readers feel free to respond to my plea that "enlightened

conscience be our government's guide" as it seeks to discharge its public responsibility to promote peace and prevent war. Through honest expressions of heart-commitments and core values we can help each other and fellow Canadians in the exercise of our human responsibility to act for the common good – including the millions of innocent civilians who are suffering, both at home and abroad.

I welcome opportunities to co-operate with all conscientious citizens and fellow Canadians of living faith as I seek to work in the spirit of Jesus, who calls all people and nations to be peacemakers and to even love enemies!

Gerald Vandezande, C.M.
Scarborough, Ont.

Editor's Response:

My editorial certainly did not intend to imply that Gerald Vandezande or, for that matter, the organization he helped found, Citizens for Public Justice, have failed in their duties. I was also glad to see Peter Noteboom organize the conference on peace and security held in London and attended mostly by members of the CRC. It is certainly important, as I said in my editorial, for Christians to enter the public square.

What concerns me is church leaders periodically darting into the limelight whenever some obvious crisis looms to proclaim, "We're in favor of peace, love, motherhood and all things warm and fuzzy!" Leaving aside those churches with a responsible theology of pacifism for a moment, I believe our clergymen corrupt public discourse when they proclaim: "Jesus is for peace; therefore, we must oppose this war with Iraq." Such sloganizing undermines the development of a Christian worldview and of a Christian political mind.

We must not give the impression that a Christian view of government and politics rules out war in every conceivable circumstance. Although I believe the arguments

against declaring war on Iraq outweigh those for doing so, the way we make our case is every bit as important as registering our opposition.

If we brand those who argue its necessity as warmongers driven by imperial ambitions and by greed for oil, we do our country a disservice and do harm to our Christian witness. Various leaders in the Christian community in the U.S., including evangelicals and Catholics and some CRC as well (see Harry Antonides' recent article), make a responsible and credible case that we must confront Saddam Hussein with our military might now for the good of the Iraqi people, for the good of the Middle East and for the safety of the West.

We must show respect for that position. To call the Bush administration every dirty name in the book and question the authenticity of their faith does nothing but harm.

Koyzis and just war

The CC issue of February 3 contained several articles dealing with Iraq and the just war 'theory'. David Koyzis's column "Principals & Powers" could be regarded as representative. Usually Koyzis is very precise and insightful, but this time his article shows clearly the confusion [about] just war 'theory'. From Augustine onwards it was intended as a defensive approach to war. While over the centuries numerous additions have been made, that defensive aspect remained. However, Koyzis now suggests that it may "sometimes [be] necessary to fight against avowed enemies who mean to harm our political community and our fellow citizens." The implication seems to be that just war is not defensive anymore.... When just war can mean defensive and offensive, the notion has outlived its usefulness.

Bert den Boggende
Brooks, Alta.

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Opinion/Letter

Examining the Law of Love

This short essay on the law of love sprang forth out of ongoing discussions on CRC Voices, one of the many online discussion groups operating in cyberspace. I asked Marv Hoogland for permission to reprint it for those of us not hooked up to or hooked on the web, because it does such a good job of reminding us what the writers of the Heidelberg Catechism already saw quite clearly: that the law of God is there not to stifle our humanity but to open up and enrich it, not to cut off people from God or from one another but to bind us together, not to slap us down but to lift us up.

The Bible, of course, has its share of "shalt nots," injunctions or prohibitions—against divorce, adultery, thievery, drunkenness, homosexuality, eating too much, lust, greed, laziness, gossip, ostentation, bearing false witness, and so on. In the discussion on Voices, there were those who stressed the timelessness of such rules for living and those who paid more attention to the biblical context of those rules, that is, their timeliness. Hoogland points to an even bigger context: the Law of Love and the God of love.

When we pull specific rules not just out of the context of Scripture's overriding good news but also out of the total life of the community called to represent God's reconciling work in Christ and the Spirit, we easily denature them. We distort their purpose. Despite the best of intentions, we can end up using the very words of God in ways contrary to God's purposes.

That happens especially in hot-button issues such as war, women-in-office, abortion and homosexuality. We want clarity, definiteness, certainty. But does our need for clear lines sometimes tempt us to use God's guidelines for purposes that are at odds with his purpose—to gather in his sheep?

—The editor

One significant difference underlying opposing moral approaches to women in office and homosexuals in office has to do with differing ways in which the Law of Love, so central to the biblical message, is seen as functioning. Opponents subordinate the Law of Love to specific commands which are considered clear, absolute, and universal, whereas proponents tend to subordinate them to the Law of Love, seeing these particular commands as arising in a concrete situation.

Rather than getting into endless arguments, I want to explore another but related difference that I see between the two approaches. Both sides intend to uphold the truth of the scriptures as the Word of God. They differ, at least in some cases, in where they find such truth. Opponents find truth in absolute and universal truths derived from specific passages in the scriptures. I want to suggest another way of identifying truth in the scriptures.

Truth in scripture can be found in personal or concrete situations or experiences. The truth that is received is not necessarily found in the generalizations that we might draw from the particular circumstances. Put differently, the generalizations we draw from particular passages are not so much falsehood as of limited or diluted value as truth. The truth that the scriptures bring us comes "directly" from the particular stories or writing itself and appeals directly to our own situation or experience. The universalized truths we derive from them can have some point, some value,

but it is limited and easily becomes a distraction from the immediate truth of scripture. They do not form the main menu.

Poignant truth

This happens in other writings, too. Take this Zimbabwean song, for example: "If you believe and I believe, and we together pray, the Holy Spirit must come down, and set God's people free." Turn this song, which arose out of the concrete situation of these African people, into a universal truth valid in all times and cultures, and it becomes at best questionable. See it as a valid expression of biblical truth and faith arising in a concrete situation, and it becomes poignant truth. Then we may find occasions in our own setting as well where that concrete truth becomes truth also for us in our different but particular experience. We can be of great help to each other as we share our insights and experience.

Let me give another, more familiar example. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." Shall we turn this "wretchedness" into a universal truth, valid in the same way to all peoples in all situations? Must each of us, in every culture, regardless of circumstances and experience, see ourselves as a "wretch"? Shall we teach our children to think of themselves first of all as wretches?

As I see it, that dilutes and distorts the truth rather than highlighting it. But I can identify particular times when I have experienced that truth in my own way, as Newton, the slave trader, did in his situation. As can, I presume, many others in

their experience.

Can the same be the case as we read the stories and writings of scripture? I find that it usually is (I'm tempted to say "always" but don't like such generalizations). The example which I think of most is the penitential psalm of David, Ps. 51. Through Nathan's confrontation, David finally came to face the horrendous nature of his sin against Bathsheba and her husband Uriah, whom David had killed, and hence against God. Among other moving sentiments, David penned these words: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." What is the truth that is conveyed to us in these words, and how does that truth come to us?

David and original sin

As a child in catechism I learned that the truth taught here is that of "original sin" and "total depravity." From this particular story, or experience of David, the universal truth about sin is derived, and that becomes the truth that we are called to "believe." The text then becomes "proof" of the truth of these doctrines. The "real" truth is thus found in the generalizations that we draw from this prayer.

But is that what David was intending in this profoundly personal confession? Is this the way the Spirit actually intends us to use this Psalm? I see no reason to think so. We can also read this Psalm as intensely personal in David's experience as he confronted the depths of his own sinfulness, and leave it at that. We will then discover times in our own experience when the light or truth of this word becomes personal to us. This Psalm speaks immediately to us in our experience, without needing the intermediacy of interpretations that "universalize" it.

A similar example can be found in the Psalms that exclaim: "There is none that does good, no, not so much as one" (cf. Ps. 14 & 53). Is this word intended to state a universal truth that is valid at all times in all situations without regard to specific circumstances? I'm not convinced this approach does justice to the text. But I can well picture a situation where the Psalmist, in utter frustration, cries out in this way. Just as I find myself at times exclaiming something similar as I look at our world.

The truth here is one that is only really "known" in the crucible of particular experience. Thus Paul in Romans can confront his fellow Jewish people who opposed the truth of God made flesh in the Christ by citing this word to counter the self-righteousness of those

who assumed and really believed they were better and more favored by God in contrast to the *goyim*.

The alternative is the traditional scholastic approach of abstracting some truth from any particular situation and turning it into a formulation of truth that applies everywhere to all persons in every culture, without regard for anyone's actual experience. I see this as an impoverishment in some ways rather than helpful. But that doesn't mean that it has no value at all. Quite the contrary.

Let me make clear that I'm not against attempting to identify universal elements in the biblical message. I do it often enough myself. Without question there is a universal dimension to the gospel, OT as well as NT. I just don't want to make abstractions the "real thing."

The best that we can ask about

such universalizing of truth is this: What in any particular case do we see as helpful about it and what are its limitations? Disagreements can stimulate our reflective thinking but need not be taken too seriously. That's the way I tend to approach the whole theological enterprise. Treating it as an artistic expression is what makes theologizing fun. It is not like a "law" to which we must submit.

No one "has to" take this approach. Take it into account only if and to the extent that you find that it illumines the scriptures and the faith you hold in common with people of all ages. I think it is evident how these differing approaches may influence how we relate to homosexuals and to women in office, as well as to the broader world.

Wisdom of experience and vigor of youth

My article "Whither the Reformed Churches" raised a howl of protest from George Kloet who basically wrote me off as an old fogey totally out of touch with the young movers and shakers of the CRC. I wrote that the CRC, like other Calvinistic churches in N. America, is facing an identity crisis which, unless it asks some serious questions about its course, is headed for irrelevance as a Reformed church. I said this in the context of a serious study which put the Reformed Church of America in that category, and for the same reasons. I claimed that, to be a Reformed church, following Synod 2002's lead, we should ask what we are doing with the denominational covenant which requires of each congregation a clear loyalty to the Reformed creeds, Church Order and Synod. And I said some other things about the consequences of not committing to being Reformed, like becoming congregationalist and ultimately the victims of the mega-church mentality and leadership.

Kloet's letter is exhibit No. 1 to prove my thesis. I contended that there are people in the CRC who want to do exactly what a truly Reformed church should not do—lose their Reformed perspective and commitment. He's O. K. with pastors who are not into creeds and Church Order. In doing so, he suggests that those of us who have such commitments might be more "Creed-like" than "Christ-like." I consider that untrue and uncharitable.

Playing off the young against the old

He clearly plays off the young against the old—the young are the doers in the church and the old are holding the church back with their Reformed commitments. I can show him many younger members who are hard workers for the church and who are on fire for being Reformed. Some are "converts" to the CRC.

Many who left us to join the United Reformed are young and active. And many of our hardest workers, on fire as well, are retired.

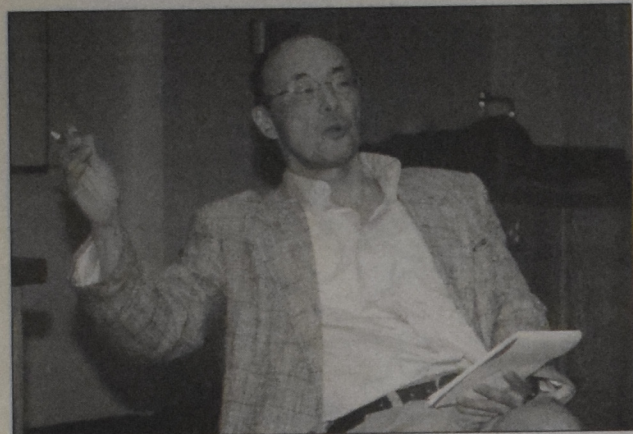
About the mega-churches, I did not contend that all their leaders have huge egos, but many of them do, and a church dominated by them would surely be the end of a truly Reformed church. And "retreating" is not my game plan and "knowing it" is not in conflict with "delivering it," but knowing is essential to delivering it properly and most profitably.

What I would like to see is a good discussion, not our writing each other off and going our own way. That is why I suggested a convention to really talk it out. And what could be better than the wisdom of experience joined to the vigor of youth?

Ty Hofman, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Media/Arts

Telling the story of your community



PHOTOS COURTESY DORDT COLLEGE

Neil Nakadate helps the students realize the significance of their own communities.

Andrew De Young

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — Students at Dordt — myself among them — often like to joke about Sioux Center, Iowa, the college town that we call home for the duration of the school year. It's an easy target because for many of us, Sioux Center is a place similar to the places we come from, a small community where everybody knows everybody else, and most of the people share a common background.

But early this February, at a literary conference called "The Writer In and From Community," several Dordt students, faculty, and alumni learned that community is more than a source of fun — it's what shapes us and makes us who we are. The conference, held on Dordt's campus February 6-8, featured three guest writers who helped Dordt's faculty explore the complex relationship between writer and community in a series of lectures and readings.

'Who do you think you are?'

"If you listen to the stories of your community, you'll find out the significance of those stories," said Neil Nakadate, a conference guest from the Iowa State University. In many of his classes, Nakadate helps the students realize the significance of their own communities by having them fill out a survey.

"The survey's called 'Who do you think you are?'" he said. "Students often find that answering that question means answering another question: 'What community are you a part of?'"

Nakadate himself has found this question to be central to his poetry, which was shaped by his background in the Japanese-American community, in particular, the internment of Japanese-Americans during the Second World War.

"Everyone I knew was shaped by that in one way or another, whether they were willing to admit it or not," he said. "Writing about it is bearing witness."

It's the difficult job of the writer, Nakadate said, to talk about things that other people in the community don't necessarily want to talk about.

Breaking the silence

Jean Janzen, a conference guest from Fresno Pacific University, put this a different way when she said that writing in community was often about "breaking the silence."

"Certain things are not talked about in communities," she said. Janzen, a poet whose works include *Words for the Silence*, *Three Mennonite Poets*, and *Snake in the Parsonage*, often writes to "break the silence" of the Mennonite community that provided a background for her childhood.

During her reading, Janzen gave us an example: she read a poem about the suicide of her grandmother, an event that her family, and the people in her community, rarely spoke about.

"To write poetry is to give new names to familiar things," she said about her poetry. "I wrote a poem about my grandmother because she had been unnamed. She didn't exist because no one spoke about her."

A tenuous relationship

The relationship between a writer and his or her community, it seems, is a tenuous one. Janzen and Nakadate may have a responsibility to "break the silence" of their communities, but there are probably some people in their communities who don't want the silence broken.

"A community isn't a comfortable place to be if you're doing something that comments on people's lives," confirmed Jim

Heynen, a professor at St. Olaf. Heynen, although he now lives in Minnesota, once called northwest Iowa home, and writes stories about his experiences growing up in a rural, Dutch-Reformed community.

Writing in and from a community isn't always a comfortable job, admits Heynen, but it's not necessarily supposed to be.

"Sometimes you need that tension," he said.

Filled with tension

Tension — the idea seemed to run through the entire conference. The relationship between a writer and his or her community, the three guests suggested, is filled with tension — tension, sometimes, between seemingly contradictory ideas and contradictory demands upon the writer.

Janzen summed it up well after her reading by saying, "The writer in community must preserve and challenge the heritage." As a writer in community, she said, she must deal with conflicting demands: to preserve the heritage of a community she loves, and criticize what's wrong with it at the same time.

Telling the human story

But there was another idea that dominated the conference: the idea that writers must, above all, tell the truth.

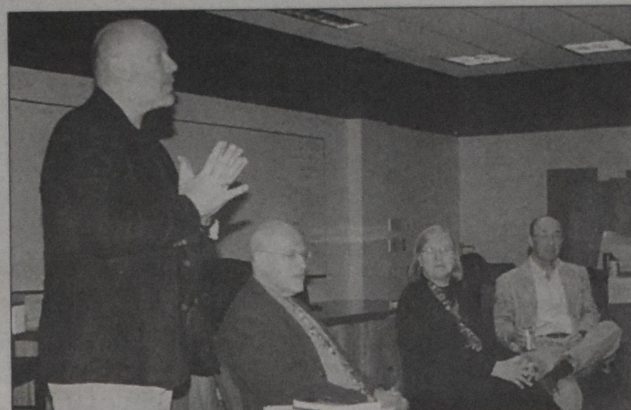
According to James Schaap, professor of English at Dordt College, "No matter what community we are from, we all aim to do the same thing: to tell the human story."

Schaap, in his writing classes at Dordt, often tells students, "What is most peculiar to you is often what is the most universal." That was certainly true of the essay that Schaap read during the conference, a narrative certainly peculiar to northwest Iowa. It told the story of Schaap's mother-in-law and how she became Tulip Queen in Orange City, Iowa, in the late 1940s.

"I wasn't sure if anyone would be interested in the story," he said, "but I really wanted to write it." In the essay, he not only told the story of how his mother-in-law became Tulip Queen, but also offered possible interpretations for the story, and explored the reasons why he was writing it at all.

Apology and explanation

Schaap, whose works include *Romey's Place* and the serialized novel *Things Hoped For, Things Not Seen* (currently running in *The Banner*), is a writer who has drawn heavily on community for much of his career. His story was read as a gift to his community, and it



James Schaap, professor of English at Dordt College, explained, "No matter what community we are from, we all aim to do the same thing: to tell the human story."

served as both an apology and an explanation for why he writes about the Dutch-Reformed community of the Midwest.

"In the end," he said, "I could do a lot worse than to tell my mother-in-law's story, and mine, and yours."

In the end, Schaap said, he writes about community because it's what he has to write about. He

and all the other conference guests gave us an admirable goal for writing and living: to know where we come from, to know our limitations, and to tell the truth.

Andrew De Young is a sophomore English-writing major at Dordt, from Bloomington, Minn.

What to do with an English major

Andrew De Young

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — The Dordt literary conference, in addition to exploring the issue of a writer's relationship to community, provided Dordt English majors with the opportunity to hear career advice from professionals in the field. On the second day of the conference, two Dordt graduates led workshops that informed students of career opportunities they would have after they got out of college.

Carol Van Klompenburg, a 1970 graduate of Dordt, led a workshop called "The Ins and Outs of Publication — Finding an Audience." Van Klompenburg lives in Pella, Iowa, and owns a writing and graphic arts service called "The Writing Place." Van Klompenburg shared the story of how her writing career has changed over the years, and fielded questions from students who were curious about the business of freelance writing.

Where are you headed?

Leah Zuidema, a 1996 graduate of Dordt who has her masters degree in English education from Michigan State University, led a workshop called "The Teaching of English — Where Are We Headed?"

Later in the day, an alumni panel led a discussion titled "What am I going to do with an English major?" Each panel member shared the story of what they did after college and how their English major had come to benefit them in unexpected ways.

On the third day of the conference, James Vanden Bosch, a 1968 graduate, led a workshop called "The Journey from English Major to Film Maker." Vanden Bosch works with Terra Nova Films, an organization that produces mostly documentaries about growing older. During the workshop, Vanden Bosch showed clips of his documentaries and led a discussion of some methods of filmmaking.

Church

Iraqi Christians make preparations for war

Laurie Spurr

GENEVA (ENI) — Like their compatriots, Chaldean Christians in Iraq are stockpiling food and fuel and preparing for the war threatening their country, an Iraqi archbishop told reporters late January.

They have also been gathering daily for prayer, "hoping God will help us avoid a war," Gabriel Kassab, the Chaldean Catholic archbishop of Basra, said at a news conference at the Geneva offices of the World Council of Churches.

Asked whether Christians in Iraq were afraid of being targeted by Muslims should a war break out, the archbishop stressed that the



Chaldeans in northern Iraq.

communities lived in harmony.

"All of us are afraid. Christians are Iraqis just like Shi'ite Muslims, like Sunni Muslims," the archbishop stressed, referring to the two Islamic groups in his country. "We are afraid because we are

Iraqi, and Iraq is targeted by this war."

No tension

No tension existed between Christians and Muslims in southern Iraq, said the archbishop, noting the presence of local Muslim religious leaders at the inauguration of the Catholic cathedral in Basra a month ago. "Of course, there are some small problems. These come from small Islamic groups that are highly radical."

Christians account for roughly three per cent of Iraq's mainly Muslim population, or about 700,000 people. Approximately 70 per cent of them belong to the

Chaldean church, which follows the ancient Chaldean rite but is in union with the Roman Catholic Church.

Gulf War never ended for them

"It [the Gulf War] didn't last 42 days, but went on from 1991 to this day," Kassab told reporters. "Every day American and British aircraft fly over our heads and they often bomb us and kill our people. This is true more particularly during the past two months."

More than a decade of sanctions, imposed by the United Nations because of Iraq's refusal to comply with UN resolutions after the Gulf War, have taken a heavy toll on average Iraqis.

"The sanctions, the embargo on Iraq is a form of war on Iraq," the archbishop asserted. "With sanctions, people are killed slowly, in a

bad way."

Due to the wars and their aftermath, he said, people in the south of Iraq are facing new diseases that doctors are not able to identify and an increased number of miscarriages and birth defects. There are power cuts of up to 12 hours a day and a lack of clean drinking water.

"A bottle of clean drinking water is 30 times more expensive in Basra than the equivalent amount of petrol," he said.

Many young people are dropping out of school in order to do odd jobs to help their families survive. Hospitals have shortages of basic equipment, such as syringes, and "most surgery is performed without anaesthesia," the archbishop reported.

Basra now has many homeless people — "something we didn't know before in Iraq," he said.

Pakistani churches warn of backlash if war breaks out against Iraq

Anto Akkara

NEW DELHI (ENI) — Pakistani church leaders have warned that the Christian minority in Pakistan faces a backlash in the event of war against Iraq.

The church leaders said in an open letter to U.S. President George Bush that war could "lead to devastating reprisals by terrorists who are located all over

the world."

"If the war does take place, we may be revenged and targeted here [in Pakistan] as happened after the U.S. attacked Afghanistan," said Sardar Feroze Khan, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan.

Five major attacks on church targets in Pakistan have claimed more than three dozen lives since

October 2001 when the United States and its allies launched attacks on perceived terrorist targets in Afghanistan, Pakistan's neighbor.

Trusting God only strategy

"The only strategy for us [if the war breaks out] is to entrust ourselves to God," Khan told ENI.

The church leaders in their letter

urged Bush "and all those who are poised for war to use every alternative means to settle the problem."

They also called on the Iraqi government and other world leaders to make an "all-out effort to avoid war and prevent untold sufferings for millions of innocent people."

In a separate letter to Pakistani Christians, the church leaders

called on them "to face the imminent danger of war with faith and Christian courage" and to promote peace.

"We would like to make it clear to all our country that Christians, members of a religious minority, are Pakistani citizens, born and bred in this country."

Christian retaliation increasing in Nigeria's religious violence

Obad Minchakpu

ABA, Nigeria (Compass) — Seventeen Christians from various church denominations in Aba, a city in Nigeria's southern Abia state, were arrested in late January over reprisal attacks on Muslims. Sources said Christians were reacting to "incessant" attacks on Christians in northern Nigeria by Muslim extremists.

Abia state police authorities reported that the central mosque and several Muslim businesses were damaged in the January 18-19 attacks.

20 Muslims injured

One of the Muslim victims, Alhaji Idi Ningi, told Compass that 20 Muslims were injured and are currently receiving treatment in three hospitals in the city. "Hundreds of our people have escaped to the police barracks," Ningi said. "They are taking refuge at the central police station. Many of them are also women and children."

However, the Abia state police

commissioner told Compass that he had visited the area and the situation was not very serious and has been brought under control.

Muslims and Christians concerned

But both Muslims and Christians are concerned about the increasing religious violence taking place throughout Nigeria. Senator Adolphus Wabara, of Nigeria's National Assembly, called on the Nigerian government to find a lasting solution to the religious conflicts in the country. Alhaji Tanko Bello, a Muslim community leader in Aba city, said they have never supported the attacks on Christians in northern Nigeria. He blamed his fellow Muslims there for creating the conflict.

Clashes on January 11 between Muslims and Christians in Central Nigeria's Plateau state left two Muslims and one Christian dead. Joel Nimfa, a Christian leader in the Kanam community, was killed in his farmhouse when Muslim

bandits attacked the farm and other Christian settlements. According to a police report, two Muslims leaders were beheaded when they led a group of bandits to attack a Christian village.

Conflicts between Muslims and Christians flared up in Plateau state in September 2001, beginning in Jos, the state capital. The crisis escalated and continued throughout 2002.

Both sides are showing an increasing frustration with the religious conflict.

Christians file lawsuit against government

Christian leaders in the northern state of Kaduna have filed a lawsuit against the Nigerian government, the Kaduna state government, and a Nigerian newspaper, *ThisDay*, over last November's religious riots.

The crisis was ignited by an article in *ThisDay* that led to the death of an estimated 1,000 people and the destruction of about 125

churches in the city of Kaduna.

Dr. Joseph Danlami Bagobiri, Catholic Bishop of Kafanchan Diocese and the Chairman of the Kaduna state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), announced the court action on January 26, saying, "CAN has taken stock of all the churches and property of Christians destroyed during the riots with a view to demanding compensation from the government and *ThisDay*."

Demanding compensation

He added, "While we pursue this case, we would leave the fate of the casualties to God, since vengeance is for Him. We are also aware that no amount of wealth can pay for a single human life, and that is why we are demanding compensation for destroyed churches and not for lives."

The Kaduna state governor called on the federal government to take measures to stem the rising wave of religious fundamentalism.

"The nation is sitting on a

religious time bomb that can explode any moment with devastating consequences," said Governor Alhaji Ahmed Makarfi.

"We go to the pulpits or the rostrum either in the churches or in the mosques, and in the name of our Creator make speeches, which can bring about violence in this country. We forget that we shall all give account to the almighty Allah for all our actions," Makarfi said.

In northern Nigeria's Adamawa state, a dispute between a Muslim cattle rancher and a Christian farmer led to the death of at least nine people.

Muslim-Christian clashes allegedly broke out when a Muslim rancher allowed his cattle to destroy the crops of the Christian farmer. An unknown number of Christians gathered and retaliated.

Local sources said there has long been hatred between the two religious communities.

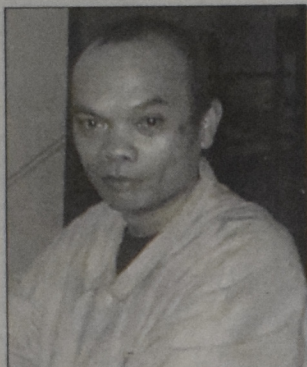
Church

Christian peacemaker faces trial in Indonesia

Special to Compass Direct

JAKARTA, Indonesia (Compass) — The Rev. Rinaldi Damanik, General Secretary of the Synod of the Protestant Church of Central Sulawesi and Director of the Tentena Crisis Center, went on trial in a Palu court February 3, accused of carrying weapons while traveling between Christian villages under attack in August 2002. At the time, Damanik was attempting to encourage and evacuate victims and prevent them from retaliating against Muslims who attacked and burned entire Christian communities in the Poso region of Central Sulawesi.

An advocate of peace, Damanik is one of the Christian representatives who signed the Malino Agreement in December 2001. He told Compass shortly afterward that he did not believe the Muslims would adhere to the agreement. He said that there were already cases in which the agreement had been violated, such as the bombing of churches in Palu on New



Rev. Rinaldi Damanik

Year's Day.

The agreement had been hailed by authorities as an important peace treaty in the conflict between Muslim and Christian communities in Poso. In reality, most of the Christians have been forced out of the city of Poso. Many villages further south on the way to the lakeside town of Tentena have been totally destroyed. The armed

forces often stood by and did nothing to protect Christian communities from destruction, and in some cases, joined the Muslim aggressors to cleanse the area of Christians.

Police failed to mount case

Damanik was arrested in early September but the police failed to mount a case against him until now. He has been held without bail. According to the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty e-mail conference, an army commander who agreed to testify on Damanik's behalf has been murdered, and an attempt was made to poison Damanik himself after he was moved from Jakarta to Palu, the capital of Central Sulawesi region.

Meanwhile, Ja'far Umar Thalib, the leader of the former militant extremist group Laskar Jihad, was acquitted by the East Jakarta District Court of provoking violence, spreading hatred and defaming the president. The accusation brought

by the state prosecutor cited a speech made by Thalib at the Al Fatah mosque in Ambon, the capital of South Maluku, on April 26, 2002.

Some 5,000 Muslims heard Thalib say, "From today, we will no longer talk about reconciliation. Our ... focus now must be preparing for war — ready your guns, spears and daggers." He declared the Malino peace accord to be treason and urged Muslims to rally together in holy war against the Christians.

Masked men attacked Christian village

Early on the Sunday morning following Thalib's speech, masked men dressed in black attacked the Christian village of Soya, east of Ambon, stabbing to death at least 21 people, including a child of six years. They burned 30 houses and a church.

So far, not one Muslim leader has been successfully tried for complicity in the violence in Cen-

tral Sulawesi or the Maluku, although several Christians have been given the death sentence. One writer commented that it seems justice is meted out according to influence. The authorities have the most to fear from radical Muslims, whereas minority Christians hardly pose a threat.

Thalib's organization, which was disbanded after the bombing in September 2002, included 10,000 militant followers trained in martial arts, handling of weapons and bomb-making. Some of the trainees attended camps in Afghanistan. Reports say foreign "experts" from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen have been training followers in Indonesia itself.

The Crisis Center of the Protestant Church in Central Sulawesi asked for prayer for Rev. Damanik as he faces trial in what some describe as a biased legal system.

Insurgents assassinate pastor in Colombia

David Miller

BOGOTA (Compass) — On January 27, unidentified gunmen in Colombia assassinated Rev. Jose Juan Lozada Cortez, pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church of San Antonio, while Lozada was traveling between his home and Chaparral.

According to the Commission on Human Rights and Peace of the Evangelical Council of Colombia (CEDECOL), uniformed men stopped the public bus in which Lozada was traveling and singled out the clergyman from the rest of the passengers. The assailants forced him off the vehicle and, in full view of bystanders, shot Lozada in the head.

The gunmen, members of an illegal armed group fighting in the country's protracted civil war, reportedly also killed a member of Rev. Lozada's church who was traveling with him.

Murder motives remain unclear

The area around San Antonio, a small town three hours' drive south of Ibagué, has experienced intermittent violence as guerrilla groups, paramilitary units and government forces vie for control of the territory. The motives for Lozada's murder remain unclear.

At least 72 Protestant pastors and 33 Catholic priests have died

violently in the past decade in Colombia. Armed groups known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Army of National Liberation (ELN) and the Auto Defense Union of Colombia (AUC) commit the majority of the murders, although in some cases investigations have implicated corrupt politicians and drug traffickers.

The CEDECOL human rights commission is in the process of creating a support network for victims and their families. The organization also documents incidents involving kidnapping, extortion, threats and displacement of church members and ministers.

Pastor urged to leave

Recently, CEDECOL leaders urged Rev. Esnilder Popó, pastor of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church and president of the local ministerial association in Santander, Cauca, to leave the community following an attempt on his life two months ago.

The incident occurred during Sunday worship on November 13, when two strangers entered the church as Popó was preparing to preach. During the morning message, one of the men stood up and moved toward the pulpit, then abruptly turned around and walked out. The other man remained until the end of the service.

When Rev. Popó finished preaching, the second man approached the pulpit and fell on his knees in front of the pastor. Weeping, he asked for help. "What do you need?" Popó asked.

"I'm frightened," the man replied. "I came here on a mission to kill you." A moment later, he rose from his knees and quickly left the church.

The following Wednesday at noon, the same man returned to Popó's church as CEDECOL representatives were meeting to discuss what to do about the matter. Two local ministers recognized the individual and took him to an adjoining room. "Why do you want to kill Rev. Popó?" they asked.

The man said he did not know why, only that orders had come "from northeast Antioquia" for him to assassinate Popó in the pulpit. "But I could not bring myself to do it," he said, before abruptly disappearing again.

Fearing that assassins would continue to stalk Popó until they succeeded in their mission, CEDECOL leaders urged the pastor to leave with his wife and daughter.

The conflict in Colombia is now in its fourth decade, making it the longest-running guerrilla war in Latin American history. According to statistics compiled by Amnesty International, more than 60,000

persons have died in the fighting since 1985, with civilians comprising 80 percent of the victims. Colombia also suffers the world's highest rate of kidnapping, an

average of four per day. Ransom payments generate the second largest source of income, after cocaine trafficking, for illegal armed groups.

Lutheran churches in Sweden hungry for Danish

Lars Grip

Stockholm (ENI) — Eleven unemployed Danish seminary graduates got into a minibus in February and wound their way down gravel roads into the forests and snowy countryside of Sweden's Varmland, a sparsely populated district with wooden churches whose pulpits have long stood empty.

More than 20 pastor positions have gone unfilled in Church of Sweden parishes in this central district for lack of priests. In neighboring Denmark, the problem is just the opposite: a surplus of 200 Lutheran priests.

The Rev. Jan Wahlberg, responsible for pastor recruitment in Varmland, recently turned his attention south, to Denmark's pool of qualified but not yet ordained seminarians. He led the minibus tour of Varmland, hoping to entice the potential pastors to this region

700 kilometres from their home.

"If we succeed in recruiting four or five of them, I'll be satisfied," Wahlberg told ENI, adding that the signs looked good. Beyond the prospect of a job, the seminarians "also expressed a positive attitude towards our way of working in teams."

"Some of them actually exclaimed, looking at the romantic beauty of the landscape: 'Here is where I want to live and work!'"

Although Danish might be understood in southern Sweden, in Varmland the language could pose a problem. "But [the pastors would] have to be educated in the Swedish language," said Wahlberg. "The locals are used to dentists and physicians from Denmark. We are living in a multi-ethnic society, so why not Danes? They will bring new ideas to the church."

Humor

The Dentist

Ron de Boer

I just got back from the dentist this morning, and I'm heading there again this afternoon with the 11-year-old for work on her retainer. I'm there so often I know Cheryl-the-secretary's baby's due date and Janice's Christmas travel plans. They seem to know everything about me, too — where I work, how much money I give to charity, even my high school

My teeth are nothing to smile about. They look like tombstones in an old cemetery.

marks. It's amazing what you'll say when you're under the laughing gas. I think I've contributed more to my dentist than to my church in these last years of teeth sealants, retainers and braces. Thank goodness for the dental plan!

Road workers of the mouth

I know all vocations can be to the glory of God, but I just don't get how anybody could feel moved to stare into people's oral cavities all day, calling out names like *cuspid*s to the person over my left shoulder, picking away at last week's asparagus and filling pot-holes. They are the miniature janitors and road workers of the mouth. But thank goodness for them, I guess. Imagine the states of our mouths were it not for the loving care of a masked stranger with a drill in his hand.

My teeth are nothing to smile about. They look like tombstones in an old cemetery — discolored and leaning in different directions. I remember my very first trip to the dentist with my younger brother — I had six cavities; he had eight! My mother thought brushing with baking soda was supposed to keep you teeth white and prevent cavities. Ah, mom.... She started buying toothpaste from that day forward.

Called to the electric chair

Our dentist was Dr. Baxter, a grey-haired fellow with a pencil thin moustache who looked like he was from some communist regime. His office was on the second story of a back alley business and you had to walk up these long stairs and sit in a tiny waiting room before you were called to the electric chair, where you awaited your doom.



HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

While sitting in the chair, you could see into Dr. Baxter's office, the door for which he always left ajar. You could see the left side of his chair and his left arm as he finished his cigarette. You could see his thumb and finger crush the cigarette into the yellow glass ashtray on the corner of his desk, and you could see the thin smile on his lips as he opened the door, rolled up his sleeves and stuck his nicotine-stained yellow fingers in your mouth. You'll notice Dr. Baxter didn't believe all those silly rumors about germs.

Don't show any pain

Baxter was merciless in rooting out cavities. He'd begin poking at a sensitive spot as if gauging whether or not to fill the cavity depended on how white your knuckles got on the armrests. "There's a big boy," he'd say after drilling into your head for 10 minutes. It was an unwritten rule between my brothers — you didn't show the dentist pain. To this day, I lie as motionlessly as possible. You didn't give them the satisfaction of knowing they'd paralyzed with pain the lower half of your head. I remember once being frozen so solidly, I had no feeling from the top of my head to my shoulder. Driving back to the farm, I remember chewing merrily on the inside of my cheek as if it were beef jerky. Cool — it didn't even hurt. Two hours later when my head thawed

out, the inside of my mouth felt like it was full of broken glass.

Somewhere along the line, my mother switched dentists. Perhaps the eastern bloc army of Baxter's home country had a new concentration camp for him. The new guy had long curly hair, wore funky clothes, and drove a convertible. He had riveted a television to the ceiling so you could watch *Scooby-Doo* or *WKRP* from the chair while he chipped and filled. He asked about school and knew which hockey teams were in first place. You hardly noticed the needle going into your gum he was so cool.

Karen's dentist could have been Baxter's twin. Her parents, like the owners of many small family businesses, had no benefit plan. The way Karen tells it, her mother chose Dr. Dolson because he was the cheapest dentist in the area. One of the reasons was he didn't believe in X-rays. If he couldn't figure out the problem by looking at it, he felt, he wasn't worth the diploma hanging on the yellowing wallpaper in his office.

Dolson's secretary kept a little-talked-about logbook of unexplainable things Dolson had seen in patients' mouths. When Karen developed a mysterious bubble on one of her gums once, Dolson shrugged and his secretary informed Karen she was number 81 in the logbook of unexplainable dentistry. Karen's brother claims

Dolson once placed his foot on the armrest while pulling a tooth. It's no wonder so many of Dolson's patients were "edentulous," which, according to the Academy of General Dentistry, means, "without teeth."

Quiet, nerdy-looking

After Karen and I got married, we picked a dentist who was quiet and nerdy-looking because we felt he was probably dedicated to his craft. Sort of like the computer geeks we went to school with in the early '80s and who are now CEOs of major software companies, which they run from their wireless computers aboard their luxury yachts. This guy was efficient and he knew the big numbers of every cuspid in your head.

However, when our kids came along and needed to go to their first dentist appointments, this guy might very well have been Baxter's nephew. He couldn't muster a smile for a kid sitting in his chair if you tickled his armpits with his electric polisher. When our then-four-year-old daughter straightened her back so that only her heels and head were touching the dentist's chair, and screamed for 15 minutes while this guy kept repeating, "Come on, open up now," we decided a new dentist was in our futures.

Which brings me to the present nightmare. Karen, in all her wisdom, chose a group of women dentists. That's right — you heard me — *women* dentists. Not a man in the place except for me and a couple of other sorry buggers whose wives were making a break from dentistry tradition. Our kids love these dentists. There's a little video centre where they can watch *Barney the Friendly Dinosaur*, and when they're done, they get a prize from the Treasure Chest, along with a new toothbrush, a spool of floss and a little sticker with a smiling molar reminding them to brush.

It's all so perfect

It's all so...perfect. The dentists have big white smiles. Their kids' pictures hang among the drills and pickaxes and they give you

sunglasses so the bright light doesn't bother your eyes. They wear rubber gloves and whisper soothing things to you while they perform root canals.

Original use long-lost

Kids these days have it so easy. They don't even have to worry about cavities. They put this new sealant on kids' teeth so sugar can't get lodged in and create unwanted decay. They're all wired up with retainers and braces before they make it to fifth grade.

So much effort has been poured into teeth these days. Their original use — to break up food — has been long-lost, although most of us still use our teeth for that purpose. How nice your teeth are will get you on television, and psychologists say white straight teeth put you at the top of the heap when being considered for any job dealing with the public. Today, you can have your teeth bleached white, you can get porcelain veneer to give yourself that movie star smile, and plates to replace those teeth lost in that stick-swinging incident back in 1977.

Those of us who have our real teeth have those silver fillings in our molars. Again, according to the Academy for General Dentistry, these silver fillings are called dental amalgams. "Dental amalgam is a mixture of mercury, and an alloy of silver, tin and copper. Mercury makes up about 45-50 per cent of the compound and is used to bind the metals together and to provide a strong, hard durable filling. After years of research, mercury has been found to be the only element that will bind these metals together in such a way that can be easily manipulated into a tooth cavity."

So no matter what you do your teeth — forget to brush and floss them, get them knocked out in a fight, eat too many helpings of Haagen Daaz ice cream, crack them biting down on a *dropje*, discolour them smoking or have as their caretakers the Baxters and Dolsons of the world — there is always a way to cap them, veneer them, fill them, clean them, and make them white again.

The excellent Dentist

God's grace is like that. No matter how much we sin and neglect God, forget to do devotions, allow negative attitudes to create decay in our spirituality, we need only make an appointment with Him and his forgiveness makes our lives whiter than a Crest toothpaste model's teeth again.

And once you've found the excellent Dentist, tell others about him.

Sports/News

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides



Speaking in code

It was about a minute before 11:00 and I was starting to take attendance in my English class. A couple guys darted in at the last second in their usual manner, a whiff of cigarette smoke seeping off their jackets. I finished going through the class list and assembled my notes, ready to begin talking about composition, research papers, and other much-feared topics.

Then Kyle, sitting three chairs over from me, popped the question: "So do you think the Canucks have what it takes to win the Stanley Cup?"

And I was off. "Well, Bertuzzi's gotta keep up his work in the slot, and if Nazy can feed the zone and head-man it right, they have a good chance. But Cloutier can't let in any more 50-footers or they'll get diced."

"Good call," Kyle said. "But what about Jovo? Can he hold the line and pinch the boards?"

"Yeah, he'll nail it. I tell ya, it'll be '94 all over again, except we'll finish it this time."

I stopped and remembered where I was and what I was supposed to be doing. I looked around. Everyone was staring. A couple were wearing puzzled frowns. Some were whispering to each other and giving me side-eyed glances.

Hockey as a Second Language

I was realizing that Kyle and I had been speaking Hockey as a Second Language. I was pleased that Kyle knew something about hockey, not to mention Canucks hockey. I got lost in the lingo, in speaking the code.

I've noticed that when I go to Ontario, people talk quite a bit about highways. A favorite topic of conversation seems to be what route someone took to get to a certain place. At home in Vancouver, any talk of highways usually ends up with cursing and murderous talk about road rage and lousy highway management. There are few options in or out of town, and the people despise every single one of them.

In Ontario I sense more of a fondness for the system of roads. There are countless routes to take, and I love listening to the lingo: "So, I shot up the QEW, then headed on down the 401, and then on up the D." I could listen to it for hours.

In fact, I try it myself once in a while: "Yeah, so I headed on down the D to Sudbury, eh, and then did a straight shot on through to the QEW, and then hammed my wheels up Airport Road, eh. Lickety split."

Confused silence from my audience. Then laughter and much shaking of heads.

We talk in codes

We talk in codes because they help identify us with a particular community. By nature, the codes are exclusive. Hockey lingo and highway talk are spoken by and meant for a certain group of people, and there's obviously nothing wrong with that. I do notice, though, that once in a while Christians speak their own exclusive code.

Imagine what things like "slain in the Spirit" and "covered by the blood" sound like to a non-believer. Even the term "secular university" comes from a context they're not familiar with. Not that we mean to exclude, but we just speak these words so easily that we forget that they're often encrypted in a cultural context.

Go on, try it some time. Choose a Sunday and listen for the kinds of lingo that we use in church and in our talk about church. It's interesting. I don't condemn it for a second, but I do think the next time I say, "I want to feed on the Lord" I should be aware of how it impacts my witness to non-believers.



Tim Antonides in a teacher and sports coach currently studying in Chicago, Illinois.

Forgiveness: powerful, paradoxical, elusive, a foretaste of what is to come

Harry der Nederlanden

Forgiveness has become something of a hot topic in recent years. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, no doubt, had something to do with this. The very public sins of Bill Clinton and of some televangelists and their pleas for forgiveness have perhaps also played a role. And recently Pope John Paul II sought forgiveness on behalf of the Catholic Church for its sins against the Jews, especially during World War II.

Too quick to forgive?

The revelations last year of the harm done by pedophile priests in the U.S. confronts the Catholic Church with what to do with the guilty: has it been too quick to forgive sinning priests in the past? Then there are women who have been abused by husbands and fathers. To get on with their lives, they have to learn to let go at some point. But if they are too quick to forgive, the abuser is allowed to get off too easily and the abuse will just go on.

The ways of forgiveness were addressed by a panel discussion sponsored by the chaplains at Brock University in St. Catharines. Over the years CRC chaplains at Brock have established a goodly presence on the campus in cooperation with other chaplains and staff. Every year it sponsors a Christianity and Culture lecture. This year the topic was "forgiveness." The topic was addressed by each of three panel members — Nancy DeCourville, a prof in the Psychology Dept at Brock, Morton Paterson, a philosophy prof, and Jamie Vanderberg, Director of Ministries at Jubilee CRC, St. Catharines — then they replied to one another, and then the audience joined in.

Psychology of forgiveness

Nancy DeCourville said she became interested in the power of forgiveness as a psychologist when she heard a news report about a woman who had forgiven the murderer of her daughter. What enables a person to do something like that? she asked herself. When she looked for material on the psychology of forgiveness, she discovered there was little available.

She took most of her definition from another project, stressing that her own study of forgiveness is only in its initial stages: "It is a response to an injustice (a moral wrong); a foregoing of resentment

or revenge when the wrongdoer's actions deserve it; giving the gifts of mercy, generosity and love when the wrongdoer does not deserve them.

"As we give the gift of forgiveness we ourselves are healed. It is a freely chosen gift (rather than a grim obligation), the overcoming of wrongdoing with good."

Not forgetting or ignoring

It is easier to say what it is *not* than what it is, she said. "It is not forgetting or ignoring the effects of the wrongdoing. It is not condoning or excusing. Forgiveness is not a quid pro quo deal — it doesn't demand compensation first."

She pointed out that it is generally assumed that forgiveness is always good. She wants to explore the notion (Nietzsche) that it can sometimes be bad, as when it is a power play or when it subverts justice. What studies exist approach forgiveness from the viewpoint of the hurt person; she'd like to look at it from the offender's side.

Psychologists need more than anecdotes, she pointed out. How do you somehow measure its effects? she asked herself.

A divine surprise

Morton Patterson, approaching the subject as a philosopher, stressed that by the nature of the matter there are no "experts" in forgiveness. The most important word relative to forgiveness is "nevertheless." It does not flow out of our nature or our reason. "It overturns human ways with a divine surprise. All have sinned; nevertheless, God forgives."

Our natural impulse is to retaliate, to strike back. We are not inclined to forgive. At its heart is not a feeling or emotional impulse, but a decision to respond in a non-hurting way.

The way to do that, argued Patterson, is to hand it over to God, to let it go.

Not a theory but a gift

Jamie Vanderberg also underlined the disjunctive moment in forgiveness, stressing its paradoxical character. It is not a theory or idea, he stressed, but a gift. We

need to *be* forgiven in order to forgive.

It is always associated with a particular situation. On the other hand, it can't be disconnected from divine unconditionality. It is a pure gift with no strings attached. It needs to be extended, said Vanderberg, to those who don't deserve it.

Because it is always bound to a situation, it will always be tainted by power structures and other conditions; thus, it always seems to elude our grasp.

But this marks a beginning, not an end. "It is the promise of the impossible yet to come that draws our hope." Forgiveness, he suggested, is not something secured but something securing — "a foretaste of what is to come."

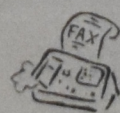
Two anxieties dominate our lives

The following quotation is from an article by Lewis Smedes, whose book *Forgive and Forget* in many ways laid the groundwork for subsequent reflection on forgiveness:

"Two anxieties dominate most of our lives. We are anxious in the face of our unchangeable past; we long to recreate segments of our private histories, but we are stuck with them. We are anxious in the face of our unpredictable futures; we long to control our destinies, but we cannot bring them under our management.

"Thus, two basic longings, lying at the root of most others, are frustrated: we cannot alter a painful past or control a threatening future. God offers two answers to our deepest anxieties. He is a forgiving God who recreates our pasts by forgiving them. He is a promising God who controls our future by making and keeping promises. By forgiving us, he changes our past. By promising, he secures our future.

"By his grace we participate in his power to change the past and control the future. We, too, can forgive, and must forgive. We, too, can make a promise and keep it. Indeed, by sharing these two divine powers, we become most powerfully human and most wonderfully free."



For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send it by fax to: (905)-682-8313, or by e-mail to: editor@christiancourier.ca

Analysis

The anatomy of Miss World

Dr. Jan H. Boer

It isn't every day a theologian gets a chance at such a catchy title as the one above. I could be the first Christian Reformed theologian to write seriously about a Miss World contest.

The anatomy under discussion is not that of Miss World herself — sorry, fellows — but that of the Miss World pageant in Nigeria as it played itself out on the world stage. I doubt that this annual event has ever before drawn such worldwide attention. And never before was it transferred midway to another country for reasons of blood and religion.

How could such an innocuous pageant provoke so much hostility and bloodshed? Explanation, I want it understood clearly, is not identical with defense or approval. My reason for writing is to convince you that any co-operation with Muslims requires a good understanding of them and their problems. This principle is so commonplace that it should not need saying, but, for some mysterious reason, in matters Islam, it is routinely ignored at the expense of peace.

Background history

Muslims and Christians are at war with each other in Nigeria and in many other places, unfortunately. That is normal for Islam, which regards its relationships with others as one of permanent war. Peaceful relations with others are only a matter of temporary strategy. Genuine peace with others is realized only when they have turned Muslim, when the House of War has become the House of Islam.

When things move in the opposite direction, when they feel that they are losing, they become very nervous and explosive, for there really is no place in the Muslim scheme of things for defeat. It makes them nervous, angry, bitter and explosive. That is the case in Nigeria.

Two hundred years ago, a Muslim revival took place in northern Nigeria under their beloved reformer Uthman Danfodio. He established what Nigerian Muslims look upon as an ideal Muslim state, culture and religion, shorn of all heretical accretions. That ideal included slavery. From their capital Sokoto, where the Sultan resides even today, they would descend upon the Traditionalist peoples in the Middle Belt to the south for slave raiding purposes. They created absolute havoc and chaos. Around 1900, Sokoto was reputedly the largest slaving empire in the world. Yet, Nigerian Muslims hold up that empire as the ideal.

Secularization process like a drug

Enter the secular British with their colonial scheme. Though they promised to leave Islam intact, they slowly undermined it in various ways, especially by providing secular education and by incorporating the traditional emirs and chiefs. They ruled indirectly through these emirs and paid them handsomely for their loyalty. This combination set in motion a process of secularization that served as a drug: it made the Muslim community let down their guard.

On the surface, however, it looked as if the British were supporting Islam. What



Azra Akin (centre), Miss Turkey, was crowned Miss World 2002. "How could such an innocuous pageant provoke so much hostility and bloodshed?" asks Jan Boer.

Muslims could not manage, namely to subdue the Middle Belt people politically, the British helped them to achieve. Many Traditional people were incorporated into the Muslim emirates or simply had Muslim emirs imposed on them. Politically, Muslims gained much from the regime, but spiritually it drugged them with the secular pill.

Then Ayatollah Khomeini strode onto the world scene with his revolution. Though Iranian and Nigerian Muslims belong to different schools, the Ayatollah shook them awake and rekindled in them the spirit of Danfodio. Fundamentalism made its debut in Nigeria.

Missions entered into the mix. It was slow going, but since the 1960s a great movement took place among the Traditionalists towards Christ. The formerly passive Traditionalists became increasingly aggressive Christians over a period of a few decades. The race between the two religions reached a high pitch, with both of them gunning for hegemony.

Two sides of the crucible

Muslims are in a semi-admitted jihad in their bid for power and revival. They want to undo the shackles with which secularism has bound them. Christians, on the other hand, are using the banner of secularism against the onslaughts of Islam that seeks to impose a Muslim style government on the country. The demand for secular structures is becoming more adamant as Christians overtake Muslims in number.

In addition, Christian immigrants from the south have moved into the north in great numbers. Every northern city has its *sabon gari*, Hausa for "strangers' quarters," where Christians reside in the thousands. Muslims regard this as simply the continuation of the original colonial quest to undermine and destroy them.

So, there you have the crucible. On the one hand, Muslims angry at having been drugged by a secularism they consider the ultimate weapon of Satan; nervous as they observe their numerical advantage eroding steadily; and their strongholds infested with non-Muslim vermin they like to refer to as *khafiri*. On the other hand, Christians seeking to stem the perpetual Muslim jihad for power with the tool of secularism. "Secularism" in fact has become the flashpoint for both, one opposing it, the other promoting it.

Currently, Muslims are concentrating on restoring their legal system, the sharia, as

their solution to secularism. They want to shrug off the yoke of an imposed, foreign secular legal system. Sharia, they believe, will help the country revive its economy and overcome the corruption that is dragging the country into an ever deepening hole. Though they keep promising that sharia holds only for Muslims, they honor this promise only by breaking it time and again.

Christians, Muslims deaf to each other

Christians have noticed this and thus strongly resist the push for sharia. Because Muslims are clearly not serious about restricting sharia to Muslims, Christians are not prepared to listen to any arguments for sharia, not even legitimate ones. They are deaf to legitimate Muslim complaints about the imposition of a foreign legal system. In fact, both camps are deaf to each other.

The easy resort by Christians to secular thought is due to the influence of Western missions that have brought the gospel wrapped in the cloth of the traditional Western worldview. That worldview, it has been widely recognized by scholars of every stripe and color, includes a dualism that separates religion and spirituality from so-called "mundane" or "secular" affairs. Possibly due to the creeping influence of Dutch Calvinism through its Canadian and American institutions, even Evangelical mission bodies are beginning to reject this dualism, but the damage has been done. It forms part of the heritage of Nigerian Christians with which they counter the Muslim challenge. I regret that heritage, for it has handicapped them in their approach to a holistic Islam. For this reason I seriously battled it throughout my 30 years in Nigeria.

The point is that this is a confusing heritage that has prevented Christians from developing a theologically responsible and consistent stance. While Muslims are inconsistent in their application of sharia, Christians are inconsistent in their application of secularism. While they demand separation of church and state, they are also clamoring for government funds to keep their health and educational institutions going. While they declare that the church should not be involved in politics, their main mouthpiece, Christian Association of Nigeria, is highly politicized.

As a result, neither party believes nor trusts the other. Neither party lives up to their declared intentions. The battle has brought the country to a state of perpetual suspense that is constantly searching the horizon for a spark to make it ignite. It envelopes all cultural segments. The spark can be a totally unrelated event like a burglary, as long as it sets a Muslim or two against a Christian. Often the explosion can be predicted because tension has been brought to a feverish level. It is only the nature of the spark that cannot be predicted.

The Miss World pageant of 2002 contained a few such sparks.

Muslim problems with the pageant

Muslims were hesitant about holding the pageant in Nigeria to begin with. They

associate the event with bikinis and other forms of blatant sex, something that deeply offends them, at least, in public. Thus, early rumblings started about the event being an offence to Muslim morals. That should have put the government on its guard for possible violence.

There were several complications that increased Muslim apprehension. The event was to be flaunted through the media before the entire world. It was televised in 142 countries. Since its open sexuality is contrary to Muslim law, this was like flaunting Muslim defeat. It implied that they had lost control in Nigeria. In addition, it was scheduled to be held during the Muslim fast, a period that calls for sobriety and reflection. Since it would also be televised in Nigeria, it would divert the attention of many Muslims from the spiritual exercise of fasting. To them, it was clearly part of the ongoing Christian campaign to undermine and destroy Islam.

Then there was the promise that the event would not touch Muslim communities, but it was scheduled for Abuja, the capital. Clearly, the organizers were siding with Christians by implying that Abuja is not a Muslim city. It is a new capital and Muslims have been accused by Christians of imposing a Muslim face on the place. It was another declaration of the fall of an important Muslim symbol.

Then there was the international boycott advocated by some human rights bodies. The death sentence imposed on a Muslim single mother for adultery under sharia, even though delayed, raised the ire of these human rights bodies. The president of Nigeria assured the pageant and the rest of the world, that Nigeria would not allow the execution to take place. The constitution, the world was assured, has precedence over sharia. This amounted to a presidential declaration of war on the pro-sharia movement. These developments clearly placed the pageant on the anti-sharia side, even though the organizers had nothing to do with the boycott.

To top it all off, the beauty queens were invited to Aso Rock, the presidential residence, where they had tea with the president, and the chaplain conducted a prayer meeting. Only in Nigeria! While all of this might have seemed innocuous to innocent bystanders, everything about the Miss World contest smelled of anti-sharia sentiments.

The real spark to riots

And then came the real spark — probably one of the most famous gaffes in history of Christian-Muslim relations by Isioma Daniel, an innocent young female reporter for *ThisDay*, who had little understanding of Nigerian Muslim dynamics. A Christian from the far south who had spent time in England as a reporter, she could hardly be expected to have her pulse on the situation. In a defense of the pageant, she lightheartedly suggested that Prophet Mohammed would not have objected to the event. He probably would have married one of the beauties!

That was more than Muslims could take. Now Christians had crossed the line to insult the holy Prophet.

In no time the city of Kaduna rocked with

Analysis

a riot that left more than 200 dead, not to speak of the destruction of numerous churches, mosques and hotels. At the end, Christian youths got out of hand and took revenge by destroying mosques. I will resist the temptation to describe the mayhem itself and refer you to my website (www.SocialTheology.com). But it was bloody in true Nigerian style. For Kaduna city this was at least the fourth bloody religious riot.

Reactions of Muslim leaders

Muslim leaders did not take kindly to the gaffe either. Dr. Ibrahim Datti, President of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, stated that the newspaper *ThisDay* had declared war on Muslims. They should retaliate with their own war. Another leader, Dr. Mohammed Mahdi, allegedly actually came to see the ruckus and declared, "Muslims in the country have been pushed to the wall and it is high time we reacted vehemently and swiftly."

The Council of Imams and Ulama of Kaduna published a statement that expressed outrage at this insult against the religious and moral sensibility of Muslims, calling the article blasphemous and satanic.

The Deputy Governor of Zamfara State pronounced a fatwa on Miss Isioma and some members of the paper's management team, the same sentence served on Salman Rushdie some years ago. It means open season on them. Anyone is allowed to kill her. Soon afterwards, Muslim authorities declared the fatwa invalid, since it was pronounced by one without such authority.

However, as far as the ruckus was concerned, most Muslim leaders, even those who were upset about the pageant and the gaffe, publicly disapproved of it as not befitting true Muslims. Sheikh Karibullah Nasir Kabara, Vice President of the Supreme Council for Muslims, though he had harsh words for the paper and demanded that the managers be punished, also urged Muslims to remain calm.

Some prominent leaders like Lateef Adegbite not only urged people to remain calm, but also that they accept the apology. A lawyer, he had threatened legal action if the paper did not apologize for what he dubbed that "dastardly statement . . . without caring for the effect such tantrum would have on the psyche of Muslims." When that apology came, he pleaded with Muslims that it should be accepted and that the paper should be forgiven.

Explanations for the ruckus

But was it really a religious riot? That's always a question in Nigeria. Or was it politics? Many prefer the political explanation — but always as illegitimate politics conducted in mafia style.

Christian Courier recently featured an article containing the opinion of my friend, Josiah Fearon, the Anglican Bishop of Kaduna, who explained it basically in political terms without denying the religious aspect. Those instigating the riots were trying to unseat the state's Muslim Governor, Makarfi. In distinction from other northern state governors who had adopted the Muslim law system, sharia, in total, Makarfi adopted



Nigerian delegates to a recent Reformed Ecumenical Council conference. "Religion in Nigeria is a sensitive issue. Both Christians and Muslims are nervously watching each other and expecting the worst from each other," writes Boer.

it only to cover the Muslim areas of his state. Had he tried to apply it universally, he would have had a much bigger problem on his hands. The pro-sharia forces would not accept this and sought to dethrone him by destabilizing the state. These forces worked behind the scenes to get the ball rolling. Once it did, it took on its own dynamics, with hoodlums looting and others just venting their general anger at Christians by killing and burning. Eventually Christian youth took revenge.

Good Muslims and unwanted fanatics

Fearon's opinion represents that of many people, both Christians and Muslims. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Anthony Okogie, a well-known Christian activist, conceded that there are thousands of Muslims that are very good, who practise their religion in the righteous way. "But then we have these unwanted fanatics...who don't just care. Their aim is to cause chaos, not only chaos, but they want to steal in order to get what they want. They don't just go on rampage, they want to set ablaze; they are not doing it because of religion, they are only using religion as a cover; which is not good. How can a devout Muslim go out rampaging, looting people's property under the camouflage of Ramadan? It is giving a bad name to religion..."

On the fatwa issued by the Zamfara State Deputy Governor, Okogie said: "He is using that word wrongly. I don't think the man knows what he is talking about. It shows that he is not versed in the Koran. I, who am not a Muslim, know more about that word than he is talking about."

George Ehusani, another highly placed Roman Catholic, wrote in stronger words: "Where one part of the country can decide to enforce criminal elements of the Islamic legal code that are clearly at variance with the nation's constitution, cutting off the limbs of petty offenders, condemning poor adulterers

to death by stoning, and harassing those who do not share their faith every so often, the impression created is that no one is in charge of our affairs, and there is no law and order in place."

Government held responsible

In addition to Muslims, Ehusani holds the government responsible for this and all the suffering Nigerians have endured over the past decades, accusing officials of ineptitude and indolence in upholding the law.

Others who do not openly identify themselves as Christians expressed themselves similarly. A group of 33 Nigerian writers and artists, whose members are mostly based abroad, joined in the criticism of the fatwa. In a published statement, the group expressed its regret for the violence in Kaduna and parts of Abuja and noted that it had been inspired by "willful manipulation of religious passion," a common conclusion after most of Nigeria's riots. They condemned the fatwa by Zamfara's deputy governor as "a needless, wicked, inhuman ploy to further polarize our country."

Even some Muslims were of a similar mind. Sheikh Kabara called those behind the gaffe "pen terrorists" out to create tension and riots. The article "emanated from mercenaries hired to destabilize Nigeria . . . for the benefit of . . . people who have failed . . . to achieve their political goals." Many were of the opinion that someone was behind this so-called innocent gaffe and it is necessary to uncover their identity.

Art of scheming and intrigue

It is possible that someone in the *ThisDay* organization was bought over to create this havoc. This may seem farfetched only to those not familiar with Nigeria. The rest of us know that the "art" of scheming and intrigue is one of the more highly developed "art forms" in Nigeria and can go to any length if the stakes are high enough.

The State Government initially thought

that the gaffe was the major cause of the ruckus. However, as they began to interrogate the more than a thousand people they had rounded up, they also became convinced of behind-the-scenes political machinations on the part of political hopefuls that aimed to defeat the governor.

Others expand the explanation to include wider circles of intrigue and manipulation even up to international level. The ruckus and all the opposition to the pageant were somehow influenced by a group of international schemers who want to demonstrate that Africans are incapable of hosting such events. They will go to any lengths to prevent it in order to dent the reputation of Africa. The names of prominent media feature in these arguments: Voice of America, BBC and some British newspapers. Prof. Jerry Gana, Federal Minister of Information, is the highest government official to blame the mayhem on those sinister agents, but he is by no means the only one.

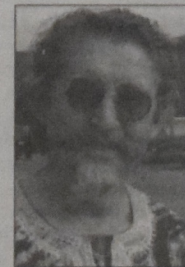
Boer's interpretation of riots

My own opinion, for what it is worth, is that the explosive situation started to build up because of the pageant itself and its association with anti-sharia politics. The gaffe was the spark. It brought it to a point where manipulators encouraged a group of either young people and/or hoodlums to start rioting. From there, the usual dynamics of Nigerian riots kicked in and we had a full-scale riot on our hands.

It was a combination of religion and politics. Religion in Nigeria is a sensitive issue. Both Christians and Muslims are nervously watching each other and expecting the worst from each other. As soon as the religious issue reached its flashpoint, the political manipulators ensured that the spark would ignite and then started their machinations.

In Nigeria, Christians and Muslims are at war with each other over the control and destiny of their nation. The Miss World fracas was just one flashpoint in a long series. Undoubtedly, there will be more to come. There are the additional issues of differing worldviews, of the Nigerian penchant to politicize everything, of extreme Muslim paranoia that detects an enemy behind every tree and more....

Incomplete as this article is, I hope to have shed some light on how an innocuous event like the Miss World pageant could result in so much bloodshed and havoc.



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[Note: The editor had to edit this article down considerably to fit it on these two pages. Any errors or ambiguities produced are the fault of the editor.]

Christian Living

Why go to church? 15

To (possibly) serve as an office bearer

A.A. van Ruler

In the previous article, we looked at churchgoing as a way of making a contribution to the congregation, to the world and even to God. This idea turned out to have broad application: we make a contribution simply by going to church and just being there, but also (not so simply) by participating in every part of the church service, heart and soul.

Some forms of our contribution get a very visible expression: the collection was understood as a sacrifice of praise. We extended the idea of making a contribution, on the one hand, to surrendering your heart, shattering your inner self, and on the other, to representing the church in your daily life before the surrounding world.

Offices are the roof beams

Now we go on to a very special form of this idea of making a contribution by making yourself available to serve in an office in the congregation and in the church as a whole, that is, to be an office-bearer and to fulfil the duties of that office, or, to use a striking expression, to "dress" that office.

We've already noticed that the offices are essential to the structure of the congregation, of the church as a whole and also of the worship service. They are its roof beams. So to hold an office is truly to make a contribution.

But it is a very special form of contribution, which we've indicated in the title by adding the word "possibly" between parentheses. By this we meant to indicate that it really isn't necessary to do this. You can certainly go to church without holding an office yourself. You can even be a full-fledged member without ever holding an office in the church. This doesn't diminish you in the least. On the contrary, we must cling firmly to the thought that, from the human perspective, being a believer is greater and more essential than being an office bearer. An office bearer is simply an instrument, a symbol of God, whom he represents.

As a believer you stand over against God; you are his correspondent, his partner. This is the core and heart of being an unimpaired human being.

When you take on an office, you are always to some degree an impaired human being. Not as badly as when you are a sinner. Sin impairs you much more deeply than holding an office, but an office does have something strange, if not

unnatural, about it, especially an office in the church, in the order of salvation. Whoever holds a church office is no longer completely ordinary or simply human.

But one can be chosen for it. That's what happens when you are elected and called to office. This is done by the congregation. But it is done on behalf of God, so it is really God who does it. He judges who is fit and ready to hold office. This divine judgment is realized in that of the congregation.

This adds a new element to the specialness of this contribution. Is it first of all a contribution to the congregation? Here are some ways we should not think of office. There are many tasks and functions to be discharged by the congregation, and it does this through the offices, which are its instruments. Or: the authority of Christ rests fundamentally in the congregation, which in turn allows it to be carried out through the offices. Or: there is the office of Minister of the Word, and then the congregation elects a few elders and deacons to represent it on the council (like representatives in the government).

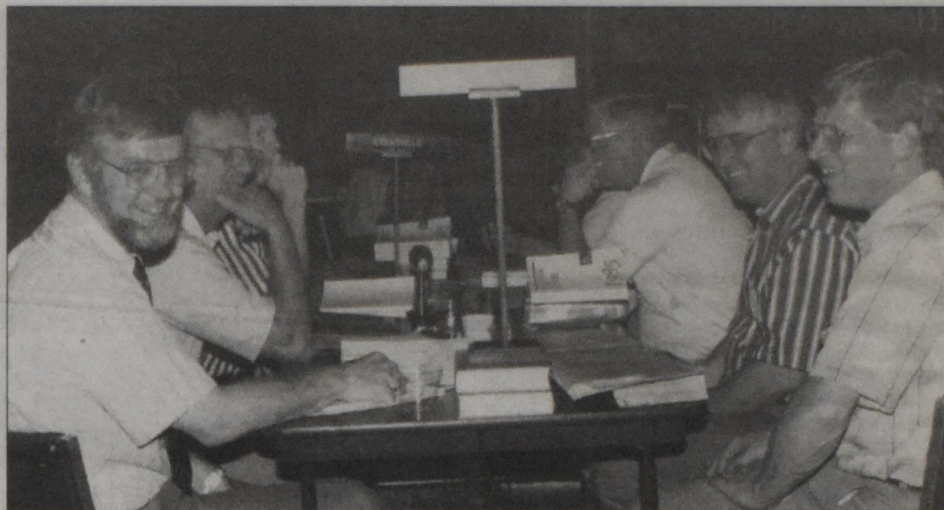
Christ rules through church offices

As I see it, we must think of office like this: all authority resides only in Christ; he is the head of the body; he himself rules his church; he does this (primarily and visibly) through the offices, which are, thus, the organs of Christ's body. As such, they give form to the body, and together they show the congregation as the body of Christ. In this high and holy sense, the council can be called the face of the congregation.

The main thing is that an office is the office of Christ, and in this way it is in and of the church. Anyone who takes an office, therefore, first of all makes a contribution to God, to Christ, and to the rule of Christ over the congregation and the church. Only in this indirect sense can we say that he also makes a contribution to the congregation.

The reformed-presbyterian system of government is packed with all sorts of wonderful possibilities that we can dwell on for a long time.

There is, for example, the fact that in principle all members can be called to office. They must, of course, meet certain conditions. They must have done public profession of faith. They must be above reproach in their way of life and pure in doctrine. They must have lived in the congregation long



Delegates to the Christian Reformed Church's Synod 1995. Being an office bearer demands much time, spiritual strength, patience, wisdom and love.

enough that others may judge them in these respects. And they must also have the necessary gifts to fulfil the duties of office. But in principle no one is excluded. There is a distinct "clergy," namely, the office bearers, but these do not form a separate, closed class. Everyone, in a sense, walks in and out.

Similarly, there is the fact that preachers are also ordinary members of the congregation. They pay their fair share and vote in the election of office bearers. They don't just pass out the elements in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, they also participate. They sing along and so on. It is even good that they are visited by the elders just like everyone else. And, of course, hopefully they are believers as well.

Not only theologians

A third characteristic of the presbyterian system of government is that not all office bearers are theologians. This is a tremendous blessing. Theology has something very one-sided about it; above all, it quickly has a tendency to dominate. But in the reformed system the leading of the congregation (by Christ) is not entrusted solely to the hands of theologians. It is in the hands of ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons. The last two keep things in balance. They form a human and spiritual counterweight to the intellectual and scientific one-sidedness of the theologians. The minister must be sure not to press the elders and deacons flat against the wall like flies.

A fourth fact: all three offices are equal. There aren't higher and lower, greater or lesser ranks. All three are organs of the body of Christ, who is the head. All three

are equally rooted in the office of the apostles and together stand in the apostolic succession. One office bearer might have a university education and the other may drive tractor, but that makes no difference whatsoever for their office.

In the fifth place, I want to point to the temporariness of office in our system of government. You are elected for a term of, say, four years. This may be repeated a couple more times, but then you are out. Then you are done; God no longer wants to use you there. That's what office is: God wants to use you as an instrument. This is a timely willing: first God wills it to be, then he wills it to last for a time, and then no longer.

In principle, this temporariness should also apply to the minister of the Word, but for practical reasons that would be too difficult to implement. A minister dedicates his life to his office and to the church. This is a worthy way to find fulfilment in life. Nowadays many a minister has the feeling that he is locked up in the church and that he stands outside life. But that's utter nonsense. Everyone follows some career, be it scientist, violinist, football player, pilot or carpenter. Why not be a minister? After all, the church is a worthwhile attraction in the circus of life.

Congregation elects, calls

Sixth, it is the congregation that elects and calls. It sees someone's gifts. A person really isn't a good judge of those gifts himself. The judgment whether you are gifted and equipped for office must be left to the congregation. Through it you hear God's decision. So to accept an office, you need not "feel free" to accept or not. If you are called,

acceptance should be a matter of course, just as a minister goes when he is called. There can, of course, be circumstances in which you may "feel free" to say "No, thank you."

The axis is salvation

Seventh, there are three offices that differ one from the other. Each does many different things, but each one turns on its own axis. The axis of the minister of the Word is salvation; this is what he mediates and represents, above all in the preaching of the Word. The axis of the elder is sanctification; he examines the life of the individual and society, looking for the fruits of the Word and pulling up the weeds. The deacon's axis is located in social ideals; he hastens to help those in need and seeks justice in society.

This enormous scope of the three offices is one of the delightful features of the presbyterian system. It gathers together the church and the kingdom of God in one swoop. The offices are not closed up in the holy sphere of the church; they stand in the equally holy space of the world and reach out to its farthest corners, even into the kingdom of God.

This is why the presbyterian church form is by its very nature oriented toward a linkage — in whatever form — of the church with the state, society, culture — in a word, with the world. Between the office of elder, for example, and that of the legislator there is, therefore, a gradual transition.

In the eighth place, these three offices come together in the council. This is where the authority of Christ is located and exercised, not through a single office but through all the offices taken together. The

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council is the body in the congregation that makes the decisions about what will or will not happen. Of course, it will keep in touch with the congregation and the members in every way possible. It will see to it that all issues are discussed at congregational meetings, family visitation and at other gatherings. But it is the council that must make the decisions.

A church council is a marvelous body. It is not the board of an organization with the minister as its employee. In the council three equal offices come together to weigh and deliberate. They are a true counsel as well as a council. If things go right, they come to a consensus and make decisions. This is how Christ rules his church.

This means that office bearers don't only go to church, they also go to meetings of the council, a very special form of churchgoing. It demands much time, spiritual strength, patience, wisdom and love. Some of them also have to go to meetings of the executive, of the trustees or of the deacons.

Although there is much more involved in the work of the council, the worship service is the focus of all its work. The council "rules" the church as organ of Christ. This "rule" is in the broadest sense of the word a building up (insofar as this is possible) of the order of the kingdom of God in the life and work of the church in the world. In the most central sense, it is leading the flock in the green pastures of the Word of God and in praising God. The council administers the service of the Word and sacraments and thus the entire worship service. In other words, the worship service takes place on the basis and by the authority of the offices of the council.

'Wearing' his office to church

Anyone who takes on an office in the church goes to church "ex officio," that is, as an office bearer, because of his office and with an eye to doing his office. He "wears" it to church.

That's a very unique reason for going to church. It is something quite different from going out of need, or because it's the thing to do, or out of a sense of duty or habit or calling. Not, as I've said, that these are not respectable reasons, but here we've arrived at a wholly different possibility. A person can also go to church to carry out his office.

We may not say this of the rest of the members of the congregation. This would contaminate their churchgoing at the roots. In this connection there can be no talk of



LAST JUDGMENT (FRAGMENT), CA. 1290, FRESCO AT SANTA CECILIA IN TRASTEVERE, ROME

All three offices (minister, elders and deacons) are equal. All three are organs of the body of Christ, who is the head. They are equally rooted in the office of the apostles and together stand in the apostolic succession.

an "office of all believers." As members of the congregation, we go to church as believing and confessing people, as partners of God, to stand over against him as the bride over toward the bridegroom. This is the pinnacle of pure humanity.

To play the bridegroom

Office bearers go in a completely different role: to play the bridegroom. We might say, like the minister they go on schedule. They must, therefore, go regularly, more so than the members of the congregation. They go regularly as a clock, which is the regularity of their office. In so doing, they show the face of the congregation and set a good example for the congregation.

Why do they go to church ex officio, by reason of their office, to exercise their office? What do they do in the church as office bearers?

I've already given the essence of that answer: they go to represent God as he stands over against his people. But this answer can be laid out in detail.

Who leads the worship service? Must it be led by the minister? That's how it turned out historically in the Reformed churches. But is this a good thing according to the presbyterian system? The pastor, it is true, is the minister of the Word, and he is especially responsible for preaching and for speaking the words that make the Lord's Supper a sacrament, that "consecrate" it.

In many congregations the minister has already relinquished some parts of the worship service, such as the reading of Scripture. The prayer of illumination is part of

that. One of the elders or one of the members of the congregation or the congregation as a whole might say the public confession of sin and the prayer for forgiveness, while the minister gives the declaration of pardon.

Personally, I wonder whether the leading of the worship service as a whole doesn't belong to the work of the elder, with the participation of the minister, the deacons and the congregation at the proper places. In any case, the worship service is conducted on the basis of the authority of the gathered offices of the council. They are responsible for the worship service, and they ought to be officially present.

The elders duties relative to the worship service can be summed up under at least five thoughts.

Elders are essential

First. The elder is an essential, if not central, part of the council, which is responsible for the worship service. In normal circumstances, there is no worship service unless they are present.

Second. The elder circulates through the lives of the individual members, of society, outside and round about the church as part of his concern for the sanctification of all of life. This is the work most characteristic of his office. One part of that is to encourage people to go to church and so to gather them around the ministry of Word and sacrament.

Third. The elder is co-responsible for the true ministry of the Word and the proper use of the sacraments. In the first, he supervises the minister and in the second the congregation.

Does the elder also oversee doctrine? Most certainly, but we must not force a face-off between the elders and the ministers. Then things turn too much inward and the minister loses his prophetic freedom. It is better to speak of co-responsibility here. The elders and ministers must struggle together to see that the whole truth of the full counsel of God from Scripture is proclaimed in an understandable way.

He must also oversee that the sacraments are used properly. The holy things must not be cast before swine. That's a hard saying, but true. There are those who may come to the Lord's table and those who may not. And the elder has the duty to see to it.

Fourth. It is the task of the elder to see to it that everything in the congregation happens in an orderly manner. He is like a traffic cop. But we must remember that the order that the elder safeguards is the order willed by the God of peace, shalom, an order in which things can flourish – in other words, by the God who wills salvation and holiness and sanctification. It is the order of his kingdom and of his righteousness. This is why elders have an essential say-so in the order of the worship service, that is, in all facets of the liturgy. And therefore he must be present in the entire worship service.

Fifth. This applies to the essence of the elder's office, not just as one of his many tasks. He is there to build up the congregation as the body of Christ. Here we mix two metaphors: that of building and that of the body. In terms of the one, we can say that the office of elder is the piling on which the building rests. In terms of the other, we can say that it is the backbone that keeps the body erect. In the elder the congregation gets stature, presence, a backbone and a solid footing.

The office of the deacon is, of

course, very different. Why should he be present when the congregation comes together?

He is a full member of council and therefore part of the collective authority under which the worship service takes place. His office expresses an essential element of God as he is in Christ and by the Spirit. He has co-responsibility for the ministry of the offering, and he also serves at the table of the Lord.

The entire diaconate issues out of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and is a realization of the fellowship with Christ that is celebrated there in the communion of saints. Above all, the deacon must function as a social type. He reminds us in the closed space of the worship service of the wide world outside and its many needs, of the kingdom of God, and of our social ideals.

When we celebrate the salvation we have received in Christ, our eyes are turned to wide vistas of the brotherhood of all men and the righteousness of God on earth, and it is the deacon that must keep open the window to these far vistas. He also reminds those participating in the worship service of their own daily lives that they live in society. And they remind the church of its task to prophesy publically to government and to keep calling the nations to justice and righteousness in the name of God.

Let's together, as members and office bearers, so experience the enriching presence of the offices in our worship services. Let's not, as Calvin puts it, take in a worship service like donkeys at a symphony concert. But let's experience it like the woods after a rain when the sun comes out and every raindrop hanging from the trees refracts the light into a thousand glittering jewels. That's what our awareness of the presence of the offices in the church should do for our worship.

Vietnam grants permission for protestant ministerial training

VIETNAM (Compass) — Twenty-seven years after forcibly shutting the Nha Trang Theological Seminary, Vietnamese authorities on Jan. 3 granted permission to the Evangelical Church of Vietnam, South (ECVN (S)) to open a class to train church leaders. While a few see it as a hopeful sign, most of Vietnam's Protestant leaders see it as a very small step toward religious freedom.

When the ECVN (S), representing more than half of Vietnam's 1.2

million Protestants, received official recognition in April 2001, it made the opening of a Bible college its foremost request. The long-delayed permission came with conditions. The church cannot reclaim its substantial seminary campus at Hon Chong, confiscated in 1976, and must use temporary facilities while it builds a new seminary. Only 50 male students will be allowed to study, pending government approval after being accepted for study by the church.

Opinion

Ma soeur – my sister

Josephina in Gisenyi, Rwanda (centre): "Holding my hand she told me her story," writes Elly Dalmajier.

Elly Dalmajier

"It is amazing to see how you do that. You women were all talking and laughing together, you included," Jack added almost enviously, "and you didn't even understand them!"

My husband said this to me as he tried to navigate the truck through the deep mud still covering Southern Mozambique two months after the floods. I knew what he was talking about. That same issue had been one of my big concerns in April 2000, before we arrived in Mozambique as volunteers to implement and manage several Relief projects for CRWRC. I do not speak Portuguese, and I certainly don't know any Changana, the local language. Would I be a white woman silently hovering in the background? How would I communicate? How do we communicate with women in cultures so different from our own?

Violetta and the women of Malengane, Mozambique

"Can you find a village called Malengane and check out the housing situation there?" This was the simple request from Janet Phillips, the CRWRC Co-ordinator of Disaster Relief and Preparedness in East and South Africa. It was a request that changed my life and started my love affair with an entire village.

When Jack and I finally located Malengane, deep in the flood-affected southern part of Mozambique, we saw people living under scraps of plastic or out in the open. Walking around in the mud and looking for people to interview, I came upon a group of women. I asked one of the women, named Violetta, about her experiences during the days of the floods.

Waiting for rescue

She told me that the wet ground woke her up in the middle of the night. She looked outside her hut. Didn't she live halfway up a hill? Wasn't the Sabie River down below in the valley? How come all she could see was water?

Quickly she woke her three small

children. The only dry spot was in a nearby tree. She and her children climbed up and sat on the branches as they watched the water rise higher and higher, raging below them in strong currents and carrying debris from upriver.

Slowly it became light, but no help came. The children kept falling asleep and almost fell off the branches in the water. Violetta took off her wrap skirt and tied her children to the thin branches.

Darkness came and she fell asleep, clutching the tree trunk tightly. Another day and night passed. The children cried from hunger. Rain fell, soaking them but also providing them with water which they drank from their hands.

Their house disappeared and they saw their few precious goats drown. Still no help came.

Four long days and three even longer nights later the water level dropped enough for them to climb out of the tree. They were in an ocean of mud. Nothing remained of their life, except life itself.

Slowly the disoriented families from the village climbed out of other trees and gathered at the very top of the hill, the only small area untouched by the floods. Life had to start anew.

Rejoice in the Lord

After Violetta told us that story while the other women nodded, indicating similar experiences, they offered to sing a song. Their voices filled the valley still scarred with signs of destruction. When I asked the translator what song the women sang, he told me that it was called "Rejoice in the Lord for He is good".

That is where the love affair between the village of Malengane and myself started. After that first exploratory visit I returned many times for meetings, spending much time with the women, sleeping like spoons between them on the stone floor in their huts, peeling our potatoes, washing our dishes, cutting our tomatoes and admiring each other's children.

And that is when Jack marveled, seeing

us women together doing what women all over the world do: preparing food, listening and chatting together in encouragement, laughing about our everyday experiences. We are no Ya-Ya Sisterhood, but a Yehova Sisterhood, children of the heavenly Father, created in His image, my sisters: Violetta and the women of Malengane.

Josephina in Gisenyi, Rwanda

I was shocked when I saw the huge black scars from the burns on her back. Her eyes became distant as she told me her difficult story. As she spoke, she needed to hold my hand.

I had met her the day before; she was sitting near me in a leaking church, patiently waiting to receive a T-shirt being distributed by the Baptist Church of Rwanda through funds from CRWRC. Soon our silent conversation started.

My name is Elly. She repeated my name as Elina. Is that your daughter? Yes, her name is Clementine. How old is she? She is nine years old.

I had been in Rwanda long enough to know that I had to be careful when asking about family. She spoke no French and I spoke no Kinyarwanda. I arranged to meet her again the next day with a translator to help us.

Holding my hand she told me her story. In early 1994 she had a good husband, nine children, a small house on a tiny plot of land. Hard work on the farm fed them more or less throughout the year. Until April 6, 1994 came.

The day the genocide started

On that day the genocide started, and within days Josephina and her family fled into the steep hills, hiding in banana plantations or in forest, living like animals, running up the steep hill slopes every day when their Hutu attackers came with machetes, trying to kill them because they were Tutsis.

One by one, the members of her family could no longer outrun the attackers and were murdered. When the genocide ended 100 days later, only Josephina and her daughter were still alive. Josephina survived with serious burns to her back. Her husband and eight children were killed.

She could not live in her own village where these horrifying events took place. She left her plot of land and little house and moved to the town of Gisenyi, living in a small mud hut on the side of the mountain behind the town, until the night before the T-shirt distribution.

Monsoon rains came crashing in

That night the monsoon rains had come crashing through her tile roof and within minutes her mud hut had washed down the mountainside. She located her cooking pot and her jerry can for water and she and Clementine waited in the rain for the sun to rise.

They set out with their meagre belongings to find a place to live. A friend took them in and let them put their few things in a tiny room in the back.

Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel
Ed.



Violetta: "She and her children climbed up and sat on the branches as they watched the water rise higher and higher, raging below them in strong currents...."

Then Josephina and Clementine set off to receive their T-shirts. Josephine's 'new' T-shirt was yellow, and Clementine's was dark blue. They were delighted! And when I also located three pairs of underwear for Clementine, they were speechless with joy. Hugging me Josephina whispered over and over, "Ma soeur. Ma soeur. Ma soeur." My sister.

Some organizations do big spectacular projects, attracting TV cameras and the press. No journalist ever interviewed Violetta, or heard Josephina's story. CRWRC does not work that way. But in big and small ways, lives of families in Mozambique and Rwanda are being affected by the work of CRWRC, bringing hope for a better future.

The women I met there have a depth of courage that I stand in awe of. They have a strength and dignity that I can only hope to emulate. Violetta and Josephine, I am humbled and honored to be your sister.

Elly is a member the St. Albert Christian Reformed Church in Alberta. She and her husband Jack have dedicated much time in the past several years to working with CRWRC. If your church or group is interested in learning more about the Relief work of CRWRC in Rwanda and Mozambique, Elly can be contacted at edalmajier@aol.com.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via fax at: 1-780-473-0970, or by e-mail at: vanandel@oanet.com

News Comment



Bert Hielema

FASCINATING. THAT'S what I call the Europe-U.S.A. war of words. Of course you have to be a political junkie like me to take delight in the differences between old Europe, as Rumsfeld labels it, and, by implication, new America. Europe may be ancient in terms of civilization, evident in its art, old cities and churches, reasons why it also is the major tourist attraction in the world, with France being Number 1.

But there also is something very new about Europe: France and Germany have put five centuries of wars behind them, including two horrifying conflicts, and now share a new political union with the same currency. They also have had the guts to surrender huge chunks of their own national sovereignty in order to join the wave of the future: peaceful co-existence.

This adventure in a new way of governing is based on the premise that states must protect human rights and civil liberties and that war among its members is unthinkable. For the first time in human history an 'empire' is emerging built on consensus and common desire rather than power and conquest. Seen from this point of view, it could well be argued that America represents the "Old World." It more resembles the "Old World" of the 19th Century British empire, which squashed any opposition with overwhelming fire power: shoot first; talk later, if at all.

IN A WORLD increasingly inter-connected, the proper approach is not the fist, but the outstretched helping hand, of which there is an increasing need. Europeans see the Bush administration as a throwback to colonial times, and, rightly or wrongly, visualize the U.S.A. as gun-toting, arrogant, imperial, racist, opportunistic, politically manipulative and conspiratorial. In Europe they call this regressive nationalism, the very thing that the people there have put behind them, evident in the European Union, where persuasion, not pre-empting, is the new way, where permanent alliances have displaced temporary coalitions.

Europe sees the aggressive new Washington stance as creating global instability at a time when major new challenges are facing the entire world; such as climate change, water shortages, terrorism and threatening famines. France is leading this battle. What else is new. It has a well-deserved reputation of being a pain in the neck. During World War II, Churchill said that the greatest cross he had to bear was the Cross of Lorraine (the symbol of Charles de Gaulle).

SO WHAT IS THE outcome? Will France give in and let NATO participate in an Iraq attack, however indirectly? Will pacifist Germany succumb and have its soldiers fight to protect Turkey, a member of NATO? No. Why not?

Both have large Muslim populations which will pose a terrorist threat if they co-operate in the Iraq war. Also popular opinion — from 77 per cent to 90 per cent — is with Chirac in France and with Schroeder in Germany. In effect this percentage applies to all of Europe, even England. The people are not so much anti-American as well as deeply against U.S. foreign policy.

Blair is playing a dangerous political game: should the war go badly for the U.S.A., Tony Blair's job as Prime Minister may be over.

Then there is the matter of 'After Iraq.' If there is a lot of damage, and there might be — those who caused it will be responsible. Even a quick conquest will involve rebuilding Iraq, something the U.S.A. can ill afford with its massive budget shortfall. Watch the greenback plunge, and the market with it if Iraq proves to be somewhat similar to Vietnam.

Also Europe believes that Bush wants to invade Iraq not because he is truly convinced that Saddam Hussein is a menace, but because he'd rather have an easy victory in a conventional war than stick to the hard task of tracking down stateless terrorists. If the Afghanistan experience is any indication, once the shooting stops, so do the dollars. That's why to France and to most Europeans Bush's America

does not look like a regime whose promises you can trust.

I THINK THAT WE ARE AT a pivotal junction in history. The Europeans point one way, the U.S. another. The anti-war demonstrations in Europe in mid-February were the largest ever seen. Popular support is the force behind Europe's declaration of independence. Throw in the death penalty issue, Kyoto and global warming, and Bush better stay out of Europe until things cool down a bit.

I believe that we are in a new phase, perhaps typified by the disintegration of the Columbia shuttle. This miracle machine showered its parts, both human and mechanical, over Bush's home state, an ill omen for his presidency, and also weirdly ironic, as the explosion occurred over a small Texas town called Palestine, with an Israeli astronaut on board who had bombed an Iraqi nuclear plant 20 years ago.

I try to be prepared for most eventualities. So I venture to visualize what will shape the future and thus be more mentally ready. Paul Kennedy, professor of history at Yale, in *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century*, wrote: "Nothing is certain except that we face innumerable uncertainties.... What is clear is that we face not a 'new world order' but a troubled and fractured planet whose problems deserve the serious attention of politicians and publics alike."

E. J. Hobsbawm, an European Jew, also a history teacher, in his *Age of Extremes* concludes that "history is the record of the crimes and follies of mankind.... The future cannot be a continuation of the past, and there are signs, both externally, and, as it were, internally, that we have reached a point of historic crisis.... Our world risks both explosion and implosion. It must change.... And the price of failure, that is to say, the alternative to a changed world, is darkness."

I WRITE THIS ON THE eve of the first war of the new century, a war that will cost hundred of billions of dollars, while funds for education and for health-care are severely lacking. It is waged, said Colin Powell, in his address to the U.N., because: "Success in Iraq will reshape the region in a way that will enhance U.S. interests." Well, well, finally an honest reason for this war. But at what cost?

Here are some possible casualty figures: Number of Iraqis and Americans who, doctors say, might die in the next war: 48,000 to 260,000. Number of additional

deaths expected from the civil war within Iraq following an invasion: 20,000. Number of additional deaths expected from post-war adverse health effects: 200,000. Number of total deaths if nuclear weapons are used: 3,900,000. Number of Iraqi children who have already died as a direct result of sanctions, according to UNICEF: 500,000.

IMAGINE: ALL THESE deaths and many more injured in order to "enhance the American interest in the region." Apparently, the battle plan calls for 3,000 "smart" cruise missiles and bombs to be launched in two days. One military strategist gloated that "the effect be rather like the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima. Such an attack would take Baghdad down, wiping out its water and power supplies." He further boasted that "in two, three, four, five days, the people there would be physically, emotionally and psychologically exhausted."

Think about this: human beings — children, women, old people, students, people like you and me — dead, the infrastructure — sanitation, water, food delivery, and all the rest — supporting those left breathing, in shambles.

All this without Saddam Hussein being an immediate threat to the U.S. There really is only one compelling explanation for the war: it is driven by oil and empire — expanding U.S. military and economic power. Many top officials of the Bush administration have strong ties to the oil and arms industries that thrive with war and that supplied Saddam with much of his arsenal during the 1970s and '80s.

Basically such a war is mass murder. I assume that Canada and Europe will participate, because in the end money rules this world and the lust of money is the root of all

evil. So we, too, will become a more or less willing ally and participate in killing and maiming thousands of innocent Arabs. In turn this will fuel an entire generation of ruthless young Islamic men.

The solution is not to bomb Baghdad but to win over the quite passive Muslim centre. This war will not root out terrorism. On the contrary, it will mold moderate Muslims into radical extremists. The U.S.A. will win the battle but lose the war, because the real war is for the hearts and minds of the Islamic world.

Welcome to Madness Incorporated, setting the tone for the century to come.

Bert Hielema will be in Southern California from February 21-28. He usually abides in Tweed, Ont.

Editor's note:

As editor I decided to let Bert have his say, but I could not print Bert's column without comment. His accusations cross over from commentary into rant and even into defamation. Had the U.S. wanted to grab the area's oilfields, it could have done so much more easily during the Kuwait war. It could also do it much, much more cheaply by lifting sanctions and buying Iraqi oil. Furthermore, to quote Powell as saying that America is undertaking this war "to enhance American interests in the region" is misrepresentation: it lifts out one phrase out of a much larger rationale. Bert becomes uncannily like Bush in calling the U.S. evil and out to commit mass murder.

Although I agree with Bert's concluding paragraph, to call the U.S. a gang of greedy bandits out for plunder does nothing to further public debate or understanding. It is the equivalent of shouting down your opponent.

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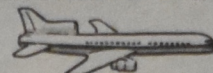
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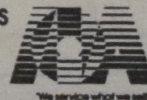
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Classifieds	90th Birthday	Anniversaries	Anniversaries
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<p>Personal</p> <p>Widow lady, 65+ would like to meet a sincere Christian man. Reply to: File #2721 1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7</p>	<p>Anniversaries</p>  <p>1953 March 1st 2003 Brockville Ottawa Ontario Ontario</p> <p>We praise and thank the Lord for the 50th Wedding Anniversary of our parents</p> <p>HILBERT and CORRIE STEL (nee Norder)</p> <p>It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them in their lives together in the years to come.</p> <p>With love from their children Douglas Stel & Lyne Lalonde Ottawa, Ontario Clara Stel - Ottawa, Ontario</p> <p>Congratulations Dad and Mom</p>	<p>1938 March 3 2003</p> <p>"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin." 1 John 1:7</p> <p>With thanks to God for His great faithfulness and love we rejoice and celebrate 65 years of marriage with our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents</p> <p>JOHN and PAULINE DEKOK</p> <p>Jack & Mary deKok - Ottawa Herb & Jane deKok - Cambridge Rene & Dorothy deKok - Ancaster Johanna Matthews - St. Thomas Herman & Mary VanderMunnik - Cambridge 17 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Home address: 7900 McLaughlin R. S. TT 503 Brampton ON L6Y 5A7</p>	<p>1953 March 14 2003</p> <p>"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:6</p> <p>With thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness, we are pleased to announce the 50th anniversary of our parents:</p> <p>JAN and WILHELMINA VANDERGEEST</p> <p>Congratulations on your 50th wedding anniversary from all your children and grandchildren: John & Anne Vandergeest - Pembroke Sarah, Ruth, Peter Peter & Luin (Goldring) Vandergeest - Toronto Emma, Liora Tony & Alice-ann (Tangelder) Vandergeest - Kitchener Christian, Brendon, Caleb Martin Vandergeest - St. Thomas Will Vandergeest - Toronto Anne & Maurice Veldhuis - Moorefield Jessica, William, Andrew, Shae-Lynn</p> <p>An open house will be held, the Lord willing, at Ebenezer Christian School, 77 Fairview Ave, St. Thomas Ontario, between 2:00 and 4:00 pm on Saturday March 15, 2003. Best wishes only. Home address: 106 Fairview Ave St. Thomas, ON N5R 4X6</p>
<p>Birth Announcement</p> <p>Van Ommen God gave new life - our third grandchild</p> <p>Benjamin Albert Born on Jan 11, 2003, weighing 11lbs 12 oz. Parents: Ray & Teresa Van Ommen brother David and sister Virginia Fifth grandchild of Ken & Nell Parrish. Great-grandson of Jake & Bea Van der Kooy. Grandparents: Ben & Willy Van Ommen. 63 Cedar St. Guelph, ON N1G 1C4</p>	<p>1943 March 16 2003</p> <p>EVERT and RITA AALDERS</p> <p>"The Lord is my Shepherd." To celebrate their 60 years of marriage their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren would like to honour them with your presence at an open house on Sat. March 15 from 3 - 4 p.m. at the Lindsay Christian Reformed Church, Lindsay Ont. Home address: Box 121 RR# 3 Kirkfield ON K0M 2B0</p>		

Classifieds



Obituaries

On February 7th, 2003 our father, Opa and great-grandfather went home to be with his Lord and Saviour.

CHRISTIAAN (CHRIS) VERSTRAETE

He passed away peacefully at the age of 82, at L.H.G. Sarnia General Hospital with his loving children at his side. Predeceased by his wife Cornelia (Van Dam) (1987)

He leaves behind his wife Metje Verstraete and his seven children: Beert Verstraete - Wolfville, NS; Gerrit and Alice Verstraete - Gabriola Isl., BC

Lida Boyle - Sarnia, ON
Baldwin & Lucy Verstraete - Don Mills, ON

Annelies & Jack Wallace - Calgary, AB
Sylvia & Don Rose - Sarnia, ON
Ingrid & Marvin Banninga - Sarnia, ON
Dear Opa of 18 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me
Because the Lord has anointed me
To preach good tidings to the poor.
Because he has sent me
to heal the brokenhearted
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And the opening of the prison door
to those who are bound."
Isaiah 61:1

Miscellaneous

May 20, 1924 Feb. 17, 2003
Axel, Zeeland Aylmer, Ont.

"CORRIE" CORNELIA EISING

Beloved wife of John Eising.
Loving mother of Henry Eising and wife RuthAnn of Grand Rapids, MI; Adrian Eising and wife Rosanne of Priarie City, IA; and Jane Weverink and husband Len of RR 1, Aylmer.

Dear sister to Martien Dieleman and wife Claar of the Netherlands; Andy Dieleman and wife Betsie of RR 4, Aylmer; Adrian Dieleman and wife Joanne of Toronto and Annie Hamelink of the Netherlands.

She will be sadly missed by 17 grandchildren as well.

She was the daughter of the late Adrian and Janna (Koster) Dieleman. She came to Canada in 1953, was a homemaker, mother and involved on the family farm with the strawberries, raspberries and honey. She lived in the Port Burwell area for over 45 years, moved to Aylmer 4 years ago and was a member of the Aylmer Chr. Ref church as well as a former member of the Tillsonburg Chr. Ref. Church.

The funeral service was held at Aylmer Chr. Ref. Church Feb. 21 at 11 a.m. with interment at Aylmer Cemetery. Rev. Richard de Lange officiated, assisted by Rev. Henry Eising and Rev. Adrian Eising.



Miscellaneous

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800-635-8288 or 616-957-1070 ext. 251 www.CSionline.org

Job Opportunity

HOLLAND CHRISTIAN HOMES INC.**Job Opportunity****Position: Social Worker**

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Salary: Commensurate with Experience and Qualifications

Hours: 30 hours per week

To provide the following services for our apartment Tenants and nursing home Residents:

- **Resource/Service Issues** i.e. subsidized housing, legal, financial, rehabilitation
- **Psycho-Social Functioning** – supportive counseling for tenants/residents, task-centred approach to problem solving.
- **Palliative Care Issues** – individual and/or family counseling, dealing with anticipated loss, grief and role changes, facilitation regarding planning for placement and other practical issues.
- **Issues of Neglect/Abuse** – including spousal or intra-familial of a physical, sexual, psychological or financial kind – efforts to reduce risk (crisis intervention)
- **Support to Caregiver** – caregiver roles, crisis management, communication and decision-making
- **Long Term Care Planning** – e.g. placement planning

QUALIFICATIONS:

- graduate of a Social Work degree, course or equivalent
- Experience with Seniors
- Dutch speaking a definite asset

SEND OR FAX APPLICATION TO:

John Kalverda, Executive Director
Holland Christian Homes Inc.
7900 McLAUGHLIN Rd. S.
Brampton ON L6Y 5A7
Fax: (905) 459 – 8667

Christian Courier helps Christians across North America apply their living faith to the business of living. Your donation to **Reformed Faith Witness** supports this ministry. Along with our thanks we'll send you a tax receipt for donations of \$10 (Cdn.) or more. Our address is:
Christian Courier, 1 Hiscott St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7

Researcher seeks information on female teachers

As part of a research project on the history of women teachers in 20th-century Ontario, and in addition to our interviews with retired women teachers, we would like to obtain copies of the autobiographies, memoirs or biographies of women who taught in the province's schools. We also are interested in novels Ontario women teachers may have written about teachers and schools.

If you are aware of such material, we would appreciate having it drawn to our attention along with information about how we might purchase or otherwise acquire it. Please contact:

Dr. Rebecca Coulter, Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario, London, ON N6G 1G7; 519-661-2111, ext. 88603; coulter@uwo.ca

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— News Canada

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Classifieds

Teachers

CHATHAM, Ontario
Chatham Christian High School invites teachers, who demonstrate a passionate love for God and young people, to join our team. We are a growing school in a modern facility, supported by a strong Christian community. We seek applications for the 2003-2004 school year for a definite opening in Science and possible openings in other subject areas. Please address your letter of application and resume to:

John Van Pelt
Chatham Christian High School
475 Keil Dr. South
Chatham, ON N7M 6L8
Ph: 519-352-4980 Fax: 519-352-4041
E-mail: johnvanpelt@chathamchristian.ca

LONDON, Ontario
Faith Community Christian School is an interdenominational Christian School (JK-8) with a student body of approximately 90 students and a dynamic staff.

We are currently seeking applications for the position of Principal for the school year starting September 2003. Qualified applicants should include their statement of faith, curriculum vitae, educational philosophy, transcripts and names of three references. Please submit applications to:

Faith Community Christian School
Attn: Marty Brouwer
7 Howard Ave.
London ON N6P 1B3
Or e-mail us at: info@fccs.on.ca
Visit our website at www.fccs.on.ca

OTTAWA, Ontario

Due to an expanding student population the Ottawa Christian School is seeking qualified applicants for definite openings in the primary, junior and intermediate levels for September of 2003. We will also have a definite opening for a French teacher in the junior and intermediate level. If you love Christ and his children, have an Ontario Teacher's Certificate, a Christian School Teacher's Certificate or their equivalents and are interested in being part of a dynamic and growing team of educators we look forward to hearing from you. An interest in physical education would be considered an asset. Please send your resume and a statement of faith to:

Paul Triemstra, Principal
Ottawa Christian School
2191 Benjamin Ave.
Ottawa ON K2A 1P6
Tel/Fax: (613) 722-5836
Email: paul@ocschool.org
Website: www.ocschool.org

TRENTON, Ontario

Trenton Christian School - invites applications for qualified teachers to fill a maternity leave beginning May 1, 2003 for a Junior Grade. There may also be openings for the school year 2003-04. Strengths in Music, Science, or PE will be an asset. Please send letter of application, resumes, inquiries, etc., before March 6, 2003 to:

TRENTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
340 Second Dug Hill Rd. RR #4
Trenton ON K8V 5P7
(P) 613-392-3600
(F) 613-392-6316

TORONTO, Ontario
Willowdale Christian School, a school desiring to continue in the Reformed tradition, invites applications for a definite position for a French specialist/Junior level teacher commencing Sept. 2003 and a maternity leave teacher commencing Sept. 2003. Candidates holding a CSTC will be given preference. Please address your questions or your letter of application and resume along with a statement of faith and your philosophy of education to:

Ms. Jansen, Principal
Willowdale Christian School
60 Hilda Ave
North York, ON M2M 1V5
Tel: 416-222-1711
Fax: 416-222-1939

SMITHERS, British Columbia
Bulkley Valley Christian School, a school of 485 students located in the scenic Bulkley Valley of BC., invites applications for principal at its elementary campus, effective August 1, 2003.

This campus has approximately 200 students from K-5. Bulkley Valley Christian is a school rooted in the reformed tradition, but contains a diverse denominational mix. The school also invites applications for the following teaching positions for the 2003 - 2004 school year: intermediate (Gr. 3-5), Gr. 7, middle and/or high school French. Applications and inquiries for these positions can be forwarded to:

John Buikema Elementary Principal
Bulkley Valley Christian School
P.O. Box 2117
Smithers, B.C. V0J 2N0
Ph: 250-847-9833
Fax: 250-847-0184

TABER, Alberta
The Taber Christian School, part of an inter-denominational school system of over 700 students based in Lethbridge, Alberta invites applications for the 2003/2004 school year for the following possible teaching positions.

- Grade 3/4
- Grade 7/8

Please send a letter of application, resume and statement of faith to:

Mrs. Marilyn Visser
4809 60 Avenue
Taber, Alberta T1G 1E9
Phone: (403) 223-4550
Fax: (403) 223-4693

The Immanuel Christian Schools

an inter-denominational school system of over 700 students in Lethbridge, Alberta
invites applications for the 2003/2004 school year for the following teaching positions:

- ♦ Grade 2
- ♦ Grade 3 (.5 position)
- ♦ Junior High Math/Science
- ♦ Band/Choir (Gr. 5-12)

Please send a letter of application, resume and statement of faith to:

Mr. Henry Ronda, Principal
Immanuel Chr. Elementary Sch.
2010 - 5 Avenue North
Lethbridge AB T1H 0N5
Phone: (403) 317-7860
Fax: (403) 317-7862

Mr. Ed DeYoung, Principal
Immanuel Chr. High Sch.
802 - 6 Avenue North
Lethbridge AB T1H 0S1
Phone: (403) 328-4783
Fax: (403) 327-6333

Or Email:

henry.ronda@christianed.ca ed.deyoung@christianed.ca

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

in Windsor, Ontario, a K-12 school, is accepting applications for a Grade 5 position.

Computer literate teachers trained to teach from a Christian perspective who demonstrate a vibrant Christian walk are encouraged to apply.

In the interests of time we prefer to communicate electronically, or by fax, but will use surface mail if necessary. Contact us to receive a

Maranatha Application Form, then send the completed form and complete resume to:

William Van Dyke, Principal
Maranatha Christian Academy
939 Northwood St., Windsor, ON N9E 2B4
Phone: 519-966-7424 Fax: 519-966-9519
Email: office@maranathachristian.ca

Job Opportunity

Wanted: licensed plumber for full time position. Excellent salary and benefits. Residential new construction, remodeling and service. Call Plympton Plumbing, Wyoming, Ontario 519-845-3726

**Toronto District Christian High School**

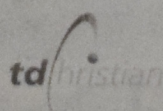
Teachers needed for:

- English
- English/drama
- Computers
- Guidance with another teachable

Qualifications: certification, passion for working with teenagers, competent in the field, dynamic Christian.

Send resume and references to principal@tdchristian.ca or to 377 Woodbridge Ave., Woodbridge, Ontario L4L 2V7

For more information please check the jobs page on our web site www.tdchristian.ca.



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Miscellaneous



The Living Word
Sermons for reading services.
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CRC
R. Vander Ploeg, Sec./Treas.
37 Brick Pond Lane
Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1
Phone: (519) 539-2117

For Rent

St. Catharines
One bedroom basement apartment available immediately.
Please contact Mrs. R. Lammers at 905-937-6185 for more information.

Teachers

LACOMBE, Alberta
Lacombe Christian School anticipates having an elementary music position opening for the 2003 - 2004 school year. Applicants should preferably be graduates of a Christian College and/or have teaching experience in a Christian school. L.C.S. is an interdenominational school K - 9 with an enrolment of 384 students. Applicants should also have a commitment to a reformed world life-view of Christian education. Please contact:

Martin Folkerts, Principal,
Lacombe Christian School,
5206 - 58 Street, Lacombe AB
T4L 1G9. Telephone: 403-782-6531,
Fax: 403-782-5760 or email:
office@lacs.ca

Langley Christian Middle/High School

(Grades 7 - 12 with 430+ students)
is accepting applications for Principal. Position begins Aug. 2004.

Relevant experience and a Master's Degree (or near completion) is required.

For more information go to www.langleychristian.com or contact
Rudy Ydenberg, Search Committee Chair
c/o 22702 - 48th Ave, Langley BC V2Z 2T6
604 533 0839

Miscellaneous

NEW ORGAN PUBLICATION

Three For Holy Week

Composed by

Dr. John Vandertuin

Published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO USA.
Available from Augsburg Fortress, Kitchener, Ont. 1-800-265-6397
Order number: 51-976993-19.

Check our our website for JOB OPPORTUNITIES taken from the latest issues of *Christian Courier*.
www.christiancourier.ca/Jobs.htm

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

New Life Church,

a dynamic, cell-based, contemporary and multi-staff church in **Abbotsford, British Columbia**, is looking for a full-time associate pastor. Are you someone who loves to preach, who loves to equip others for leadership, and who loves people? If you are and you are able to function at a senior staff level in a team environment - then we want to hear from you!

Please send your enquiries &/or resume, to: **Elsie Bakker**
ebakker@newlife.crc.ca
or fax 604-852-1554

Pastor of Spiritual Formation

First CRC, a dynamic and growing church in **Calgary, AB** is looking for a full-time Associate Pastor of spiritual formation. Areas of responsibility include: developing and overseeing small group, education, and pastoral care ministries, and preaching/teaching in public worship.

If you're a self-starter, able to equip others and want to join an exciting team of leaders for creative ministry, we want to hear from you. Please send your inquiries and/or resumes by **March 17, 2003** to:

Mr. John Knibbe
email: firsterc@shaw.ca
or fax 403-243-7710
or call 403-243-2244

Event

Senior Pastor

Crossroads Community Church

in **Ajax**, a suburb of **Toronto**, Ontario, Canada, is seeking a **Senior Pastor** for our growing congregation of 200. Our mission is to help people connect with God. Our worship services are contemporary, practical, and relevant to daily life, with upbeat music, drama, and other media. We are looking for a pastor with a heart for lost people and a demonstrated desire to embrace and reach people who do not know Christ. We pray God will bring us a leader who is able to train and grow other leaders by inspiring, coaching, empowering and equipping our leaders for ministry. If you are a good communicator, comfortable in communicating with people from a variety of spiritual backgrounds, we are looking for you. To find out more about us and obtain a church profile contact: **Shirley McParland** at (905) 720-0989 or shirlmc@durham.net

Full Time YOUTH PASTOR position.

First Christian Reformed Church in Taber

Is seeking a full time youth pastor to direct and coordinate the various youth ministries of our church. We are a church that values our youth and desire that they enter into a warm and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Position responsibilities also include participation in worship, building a leadership team, pastoral care and counselling, and supervision of the education ministry. If you see yourself meeting these needs in a growing rural congregation of 100 families and have academic qualifications and/or experience to make it all happen, then we would be pleased to hear from you! Send your resume to:

First CRC,
3902 Heritage Drive,
Taber, AB T1G 1A2

A church profile and further details are available on request. If you have any questions contact us at (403) 223-2331, (403) 223-0790

Fax (403) 223-0791, or e-mail Pastor Mike Vandyk at:
mvandyk@telusplanet.net

Miscellaneous

reBoot.



INSTITUTE FOR CHRISTIAN STUDIES

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www.icscanada.edu

Events

AGAPE VALLEY MAPLE SUGAR TOURS AND PANCAKE HOUSE

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Free admission and tours
Pancake meals and maple products for sale

Open 8:30 - 4:00 every
Saturday in March; Monday
to Friday of March break

Closed Sundays

905 892 4273

Miscellaneous

Write a letter, save a life

(NC)—When prisoner of conscience **Andrey Klimov** was released from a Belarusian labour colony last year, he emerged carrying letters of support which he had received from people abroad. "If it were not for the representatives of international organizations and for the opposition movement in Belarus," he stated, "I would not have been released even in a hundred years."

Elected to the Belarusian Parliament in 1995, Klimov was convicted on charges of fraud in 2000. The real motive for his prosecution, however, was to punish him for his outspoken criticism of President Alexander Lukashenko, who violated the constitution when he forced the dissolution of parliament in 1996.

While in detention, Klimov undertook two hunger strikes to protest poor conditions. When he resisted attending his own trial, arguing that the proceedings were unfair, he was beaten by prison officials and dragged into the courtroom. He was later hospitalized.

After the organization adopted Klimov as a prisoner of conscience, Amnesty International members from around the globe sent hundreds of letters to the Belarusian authorities calling for his release. For decades the human rights organization has been campaigning for the freedom of those imprisoned for their beliefs. To find out how you can help save a life, please call 1-800-AMNESTY (266-3789), email us at members@amnesty.ca or write to Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Ave East Suite 200, Ottawa, ON, K1N 1H9.

News Canada

Church Events

The Transcona CRC
(Winnipeg, Manitoba) will be celebrating its **50th Anniversary**. A weekend of praise, thanksgiving and fellowship is planned for **October 10 - 14, 2003**.

All former and present members and friends are welcome to join us in this celebration. For more information call: **Bev Steendam** at 204-853-2150 or e-mail jsteenda@mts.net

50th Anniversary

With humble joy and gratitude for what God has done,

Forest Christian Reformed Church in Forest, Ontario, will celebrate 50 years of blessings on **April 26, 2003**.

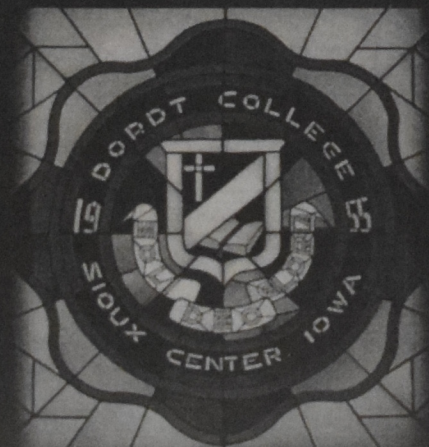
Program will begin at 6:30 PM with Open House to follow. Dinner tickets are available. Please call (519) 786-4082

Dordt College

CONCERT BAND & CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Spring Tour 2003

Dr. Henry Duitman, Conductor



Waupun, Wisconsin
March 13, 7:30 p.m.
Central Wisconsin
Christian High School

Grand Rapids, Michigan
March 14, 7:30 p.m.
Calvin College
Fine Arts Center

Sarnia, Ontario
March 15, 7:30 p.m.
Samia Collegiate

Hamilton, Ontario
March 16, 7:30 p.m.
Redeemer University
College

Vergennes, Vermont
March 17, 7:30 p.m.
Champlain Valley
Christian Reformed Church

Whitinsville, Massachusetts
March 18, 7:30 p.m.
Whitinsville Christian
School

North Haledon, New Jersey
March 19, 7:30 p.m.
Covenant Christian
Reformed Church

Racoon Township, Pennsylvania
March 21, 7:30 p.m.
Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian
Church

Crown Point, Indiana
March 22, 7:30 p.m.
First Christian Reformed
Church

Sioux Center, Iowa
March 28, 7:30 p.m.
B.J. Haan Auditorium



Events/Advertising

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Feb 23 A Dutch service will be held in the Ancaster CRC at 3 p.m. Rev. Van Egmond preaching.
- Mar 13 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **Wauupun**, Wisconsin, 7:30 Central Wisconsin Chr. High Sch. See ad Mar 3.
- Mar 14 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour **Grand Rapids**, Mich. Calvin College 7:30
- Mar 15 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **Sarnia**, Ont. Sarnia Collegiate 7:30
- Mar 16 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **Hamilton**, Ont. Redeemer University College 7:30 - See ad Mar 3.
- Mar 17 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour - **Vergennes**, VT- 7:30 Champlain Valley CRC. - See ad March 3 for details.
- Mar 19 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **North Haledon**, NJ - 7:30 Covenant CRC.
- Mar 21 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour - **Raccoon Township**, PA- Mt. Pleasant Presbyterian Church - 7:30 See ad March 3 for details.
- Mar 22 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **Crown Point**, IN 7:30 First CRC.
- Mar 28 Dordt College Concert Band, Chamber Orchestra Spring Tour- **Sioux Center**, IA 7:30 B.J. Haan Auditorium
- Apr 5 **Family Outreach Ontario Conference**. Theme: Sharing Strength and Hope for Recovery from chemical dependencies. Keynote Speaker: Glenn Allan. Bethel CRC, **Newmarket**. 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
- Apr 10 **Christian School Science Fair**-Opening program with "The Magic of Molecules" 7:30 pm Redeemer University College auditorium, **Ancaster**, Ont.
- Apr 11 Open House-Christian School Science Fair exhibits, from noon until 7pm. Redeemer University College
- Apr 26 Forest Christian Reformed Church in **Forest**, Ontario, will celebrate 50 years of blessings Program will begin at 6:30 PM with Open House to follow. Dinner tickets are available. Call (519) 786-4082
- Apr 26, 27 Zion Christian Reformed Church, **Pembroke**, Ont., 50th anniversary. Sat. - tea social, banquet, evening program. Sun. - thanksgiving service Call (613) 582-3263 for info & banquet. See ad Mar. 3 issue.
- May 3 Calvin Christian School, 547 West 5th St. **Hamilton**, Ont. Celebrating 50th anniversary. Open house at the school from 11a.m. - 3 p.m. Dinner at Michelangelo's Banquet Ctr. At 6:30 p.m. \$40.00 pp. Social at 5:30 To order tickets, send names & cheque to Ena Mostert, 22 Ambassador Dr. **Hamilton**, ON L9C 2N8
- May 3 Sarnia Christian School, **Sarnia**, Ont. 50th 2-4 p.m. open house. Dinner/program 5:30 Contact 519-383-7750 or odolphi@lkdsb.net See ad this issue
- Oct 10-14 The Transcona CRC (Winnipeg, Manitoba) will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary with praise, thanksgiving & fellowship For info call: Bev Steendam at 204-853-2150 or jsteenda@mts.net

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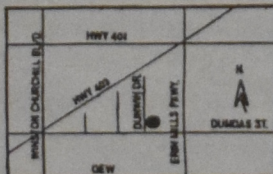
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2003 Ministers' Conference

Guest speaker: Nancy Pearcey is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute which explores issues of culture and society. She has been writing and speaking on science and Christian worldview since 1977. Her books include *The Soul of Science* and *How Now Shall We Live?* (with Chuck Colson).

Theme: "The Relevance of a Christian Worldview for Pastoral Ministry"

Date: March 11, 2003 10 am - 3 pm Cost: \$20, including lunch Please register with Doreen at ext. 4208 or dvdan@redeemer.on.ca

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Phone: (905) 648-2131 Fax: (905) 648-2134 www.redeemer.on.ca

50th Anniversary

With thanksgiving to the Lord, the

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On Sunday a special thanksgiving service will be held.

Call for further information. To attend the banquet, RSVP before April 7. Phone: (613) 582-3263

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Saturday, May 3, 2003

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News

Mustard Seed Ministry grows in Calgary

Alan Doerksen

CALGARY, Alta. — Like a proverbial mustard seed, Calgary's Mustard Seed Ministry has grown from humble beginnings 30 years ago to the large and growing ministry to the homeless it is today. Going beyond the services provided by church-run Out of the Cold programs, The SEED (as it is known by its staff) provides housing, employment training, assistance with starting up businesses, and even wilderness adventure trips for its guests (clients).

"The Mustard Seed is a holistic ministry that can support an individual from street level poverty to higher levels of social and economic independence," writes The SEED's executive director, Pat Nixon, in a recent newsletter. "We desire to see lives changed.... We want to make a true difference in people's lives. We are determined to provide the type of services that will give those suffering the most difficult effects of homelessness a chance to step above their pain."

Nixon knows about homelessness first-hand. When he was 13, he ran away from home and wound up on the streets of Calgary, where members of First Baptist Church helped him out, reports *Globe and Mail* columnist Roy MacGregor. Although he went to jail for armed robbery and auto theft, after his release the same church members helped him out. This time, he changed his lifestyle, and later on he founded The SEED.

Coffee house to street ministry

The SEED started in 1973 as a coffee house outreach called the "Burning Bush," run by First Baptist Church. "Many of those who would drop in were street people with little understanding of the church or its message of hope," says The SEED web site (www.theseed.ca). "Many people became Christians in this informal setting. Throughout the '70s and '80s, those who helped operate the Burning Bush were compelled by a deep compassion to move further into the growing street community of the inner city...."

To begin with, The SEED was a street church, "a church of street people, for street people and run by ex-street people."

"But somewhere along the way, we veered off the original track. We became no different than many churches in the community.... The street people felt uncomfortable in an increasingly structured church atmosphere, and our presence as a church gave a false impression to the greater Church community, suggesting that there was little



COURTESY MUSTARD SEED MINISTRY

Guests line up at the entrance to Calgary's Mustard Seed Ministry.

need for them to participate in street ministry since we were already being a church to that community."

Because of this, in 1989, the name was changed to The Mustard Seed Street Ministry (The SEED) and declared itself a ministry of the church to the street people of Calgary. "We began educating the church as to their obligation to care for the underprivileged. This change in our philosophy of street ministry was the turning point that allowed us to realize our present growth, a growth that would not have happened unless the members of the street church were willing to give up what had become familiar to them."

Since then, The SEED has continued to grow. Although started by First Baptist, The SEED is "very interdenominational now," reports Diana Schwenk, The SEED's development co-ordinator. "We have about 600 churches supporting us. We have about 800 prayer partners." The SEED is responsible to the Baptist Union of Western Canada and the North American Baptist Conference.

Schwenk explains that the project's name comes from Matthew 13:31-32, which speaks of the Kingdom of God growing from a

tiny mustard seed into a tree. Although now a ministry rather than a church, The SEED is still very much faith-focused, she tells *Christian Courier*.

The SEED continues to hold church services, each Sunday afternoon, attended by about 100 people. "We have a very holistic approach," says Schwenk. "Everyone knows we're a Christian organization." There is a focus on friendship evangelism. "We build a trusting relationship." The SEED also runs an Alpha course attended by 150 people, and a chaplain is available to meet with guests.

Homelessness is a serious problem in Calgary. "From 2000 to 2002, we had a 34 per cent increase" in homelessness, asserts Schwenk. But she notes that half of The SEED's clients have jobs — sometimes even three or four jobs.

Like many other Canadian cities, Calgary has church programs to help the homeless. One difference The SEED has from those programs is its focus on making people independent.

"We have a 50 per cent success rate" in helping people achieve independence, says Schwenk. Success can mean helping them deal with addictions or reunite with families.

The SEED offers a wide variety of services, including meals, emergency beds, and both short-term and long-term housing programs. Applicants must want to actively work through the concerns in their lives that keep them from becoming independent. Staff meet regularly with residents to set goals and provide necessary support and even reading, math and writing programs, if needed.

The agency also runs two stores: The SEED Store, which provides donated clothing and personal hygiene products free to guests, and The SEED Works Store, which sells handcrafted leather products created by them.

Helping start businesses

The Creative Centre is the arm that features Business Creation and Fine Arts programs. The Business Creation section encourages guests to work on their employment skills or teaches them how to start their own small business ventures. They also have the opportunity to learn woodworking and other creative building skills. The Woodworking Shop provides an opportunity for people to earn a small income as they learn by making products for sale.

Recently, Schwenk sat in on a business presentation by people SEED had trained. "I was just blown away!" she says. The training helps guests "believe in themselves."

The Creative Centre provides small business education, support, space and equipment to help entrepreneurs develop and implement feasible business plans. The business community has been very interested, and a number of businesses have offered to provide start-up funding and support for new ventures.

The Fine Arts component of the Creative Centre will begin in the spring of 2003. It will introduce individuals to a variety of creative arts and help them identify potential skills, abilities and talents. To date, programs have been started in creative writing and photography.

The SEED even offers two wilderness trips each year. Both trips offer outdoor camping in the mountains. One includes mountain biking, canoeing and basic rock climbing for three days in the Kananaskis area. The other offers mountain horseback riding and white water rafting for four days.

Looking to the future, The SEED is considering developing a "wellness centre." It would focus on the health of guests and might involve providing medicine in backpacks to street people who need it, suggests Schwenk.

News Digest

Up on the high wire

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (AP) — A teenager was catapulted at least 25 feet in the air during an auto accident but grabbed onto overhead utility wires like an action hero and dangled for about 20 minutes before a rescue crew brought him down by ladder.

Joe R. Thompson III, 18, was treated for bruises and scratches at a hospital and was released. "God was definitely in control," he said. "I just kept saying a prayer over and over."

Thompson lost control of his Jeep recently after another car suddenly turned in front of him. Thompson's Jeep clipped the other car and rolled over and over, possibly five times, witnesses said. The Jeep's fiberglass top was ripped off, and Thompson, who was not wearing a seat belt, flew through the air, bouncing off three power lines and falling onto what he thinks was a telephone wire and grounding wire. His leg caught in one wire, and he grabbed for the other. The wires were insulated, but the power lines above him had to be turned off before a rescue ladder could be raised.

The driver of the other car, Justin B. Elam, of Olathe, Kan., came immediately to check on Thompson.

"I just started saying, 'Dude, turn off my car,'" said Thompson. "He looked around at first, he couldn't find me. Then he looked up and saw me."

Indian's 103rd birthday

TADOULE LAKE, Man. (CP) — She still smokes and drinks and has lost her sight, but nothing would stop Betsy Anderson from attending her 103rd birthday party in this northern Manitoba community. Born in 1900 in a caribou hide teepee, Anderson has lived most of her life near the 60th parallel — the boundary between Manitoba and Nunavut.

She still remembers "contact" — the Sayisi Dene peoples' first encounter with white people. The Sayisi Dene were still a nomadic people and followed the caribou herd for survival.

Karaoke car

TORONTO — Geely Group, China's only privately-owned automaker, is about to produce the first car equipped for karaoke. The Beauty Leopard, scheduled to go on sale in April, will be equipped with a karaoke machine, as well as a phone and navigation gear, Reuters reports.